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PACIFIC STUDIES

SPECIAL ISSUE: THE ARTS AND POLITICS

Vol. 15, No. 4

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INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGING COMMUNICATIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY PACIFIC

Karen L. Nero, *Guest Editor*
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At the risk of appearing to segment cultural expressions and their instrumental intents, the authors of this volume focus on the little-studied intersection of the arts and politics in contemporary Pacific societies. Politics has been a dominant subject in both historical and contemporary studies. The study of Pacific arts lags far behind, hampered both by Eurocentric definitions of “art” and distinctions between “arts” and “crafts,” and by the disruption of indigenous production and performance genres by missionization and colonization. Despite recent challenges (see Jewsiewicki 1989), Eurocentric mental constructs continue to influence both lay and academic discourse as well as the Western philosophical traditions that separate “art” from the more mundane area of political institutions, mirrored by anthropological divisions between “political anthropology” and “the anthropology of art.” The transformative and constitutive power of artistic expression is well recognized in other parts of the world (see especially Cohen 1981; Cowan 1990; Jara 1984; Mitchell 1956; Nunley 1987; Peacock 1987; Thompson 1974), but neglected in Pacific studies. The literature on the intersections between Pacific arts and politics is fragmentary, dispersed in regional publications at times difficult to obtain, and often of article rather than monograph or book length and depth (for exceptions, see Bateson 1958; Browning 1970; Dark 1974; Dean 1978; Hanson and

Hanson 1984; Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Luomala 1984; Mead and Kernot 1983; Myers and Brenneis 1984; Poort 1975; Feldman 1986; Schiell and Stephen 1992; Smith 1985; Sutton 1988; Warlukurlangu Artists 1987; Wild 1986).

In 1988, when I proposed the topic of "The Arts and Politics" for an Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) symposium, initial puzzlement at such an incongruous combination soon turned into excitement as participants realized new insights spurred by such a perspective. This volume, strengthened by the addition of Sinavaiana's essay, is the result of the 1990 Kaua'i ASAO symposium; three participants have published their contributions elsewhere (Feinberg 1990; Rosi 1991; Kahn n.d.). Kaeppler, long concerned with the issues we raise (see especially 1977, 1979a, 1988, 1991b), agreed to offer an epilogue on the anthropological study of Pacific art.

What Is Art?

An initial challenge was the definition of our subject matter. The arts, as defined in the Western tradition, do not exist in many Pacific societies. Where ritual carvings corresponded to our category of sculpture, for example, they were for the most part destroyed during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century politics of conversion to Christianity. Or they were transported to European and American museums and collections, becoming "art by destination" (Maquet 1971), part of the Western fascination with "Primitive Art" (Rubin 1984; Price 1989; Hiller 1991), and incorporated into the processes through which Westerners defined themselves as opposed to "primitive others" (Cole 1985; Clifford 1988; Stewart 1984; Stocking 1985; Napier 1992). Today those sculptures produced for sale—as local peoples explore new ways of articulating with the world economic system that permeates island structures—risk being denigrated as "tourist art" even though much of what today comprises "Primitive Art" collections was once "tourist art." Many other sculptures that were not alienated are fragile, in fact are designed as impermanent, their eventual disintegration and reincorporation into the forest conceptualized as part of the life cycle of creation and reintegration with the earth and seasons (Davenport 1986; Hauser-Schäublin 1985). Many of the "soft" valuables, such as Polynesian fine mats, suffer on two counts; they are made by women, most of whose creations Westerners rarely recognize as "art," and are of media more usually denigrated as "craft," the category into which most non-Western productions are dumped. Western and non-Western conceptu-

alizations of artistic creations fit poorly together, and are not aided by practices that continue to segregate the display of non-Western arts in special "ethnic," "tribal," or regional art galleries, if not more often in natural history—not art—museums, for example, Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History's new display *Pacific Spirits* or the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History as the locale for the Australian Aboriginal traveling exhibition *Dreamings* in 1989.

Rather than too closely defining what art should be, we symposium participants therefore agreed to consider all types of performance and production that are a focus of aesthetic attention within a particular society (Maquet 1971). Our studies draw upon the analytical constructs developed in the study of ritual, symbolism, and semiotics (Firth 1951; Turner 1969, 1974, 1982; Babcock 1978; Bloch 1974, 1975; Geertz 1973; Kapferer 1979b; Kertzer 1988; Moore and Myerhoff 1975; Ortner 1974), and upon the recent literature about performance (Turner 1987; Babcock 1984; Bauman 1977; Brenneis 1987; Fabian 1990; Fernandez 1986; Hymes 1975; Kuiper 1990; MacAloon 1984; Royce 1977; Schechner 1985; Schechner and Appel 1990; Schechner and Schuman 1976; Schieffelin 1985; Turner and Bruner 1988).

Most analytic attention to the political aspects of the arts to date has been on their use in ritual (Schieffelin 1976; Cannadine and Price 1987; Kertzer 1988; Neff 1987). Although the ritual focus is highly important, not all "tribal" arts are concerned with ritual or religion, and the possibility that certain artistic productions may convey new pan-national identities may lie in their location in the mundane, as discussed below. As most scholarly sources on Pacific arts have emphasized the visual arts (Wingert 1953; Bodrogi 1959; Buhler, Barrow, and Mountford 1962; Force and Force 1971; Guiart 1963; Schmitz 1971; Mead 1979; Gathercole, Kaeppler, and Newton 1979; Brake, McNeish, and Simmons 1980; Corbin 1988), we planned to focus on little-studied aspects of performing arts such as dance (see the following essays by Petersen, Pinsker, Flinn, Donner), oratory and literature (Duranti, Sinclair), theater (Hereniko, Sinavaiana, Billings), architecture (Nero; see also Kirch 1990; Rosi 1991; Schuster 1985), and the use of art to create or challenge the political order or sense of identity (essays here by Howard, Jones, Nero, Stevenson; see also Kahn n.d.; Feinberg 1990) or to communicate national goals (Fitzpatrick's article). Yet even these glosses are misleading, for they create the impression that "dance" or "theater" is isomorphic in all cultures. One important characteristic of Pacific artistic productions is their transcendence of neat Western categories, either of subject matter or locale.

The following essays focus upon multimedia creations, ones that span Western genres and that derive much of their power and instrumental challenge through their combination of multiple sensory stimuli—visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile. (Our study could include taste and ingestion, although the political aspects of kava and tobacco use have been well analyzed elsewhere [e.g., Knauff 1987; Poole 1987; see especially Stoller 1989 and Howes 1991 for directions toward an anthropology of the senses].) These multisensory creations often paradoxically combine “play” with deadly seriousness (Bateson 1972:177–193). For instance, the impact of Pacific dance derives from its proximity to, and frequent incorporation of, the audience as well as from its combination of media and sensory stimuli: bodily movements, costumes, fragrant and colorful decorations, singing, chanting, musical or percussive instruments, movement through space. Performances and productions are rarely segregated temporally or physically in structures that mark such acts as “art.” Certain types of performances may be reserved for certain occasions (such as described in Hereniko’s 1990 study of clowning at weddings) or they may as easily appear at new locales. Rarely is theater confined to a stage, and the new Pacific theaters involve the audience in their very creation in ways rarely found in the West. Even though certain genres of dance and singing may be temporally marked by leaders, either for public display and definitions of identity (see the essays in this volume by Donner, Petersen, and Pinsker) or as a form of social control (Flinn’s contribution), other dances and songs may be spontaneous or part of normal daily and nightly activities (Burrows 1963).

What Is Politics?

Our group’s definition of politics is perhaps equally eclectic, as once again political action and structures may not well fit outsider preconceptions. Rather, we decided to focus on the elements of personal and societal power as structured through social relationships, whether or not formalized, looking at the structures and processes through which power is established, mediated, and maintained. Throughout much of the Pacific these structures are being transformed from within and without, with continued adjustments by local communities as they are incorporated into new states and nations and as these nations develop postcolonial relationships with others. Autochthonous and contemporary political structures often overlap, at times in competition, at times in coordination. A major point of articulation and challenge is through

the arts, fighting via posters and billboards claiming cultural knowledge and continuity with the past (Nero's essay) or with styles of dress and speech demonstrating ethnic heritage to elicit voter support (as Jones describes). New Pacific governments use outside forms (flags, bank notes and coins, uniforms) incorporating indigenous symbols both to validate their entry into the world community and to create and express nationhood.

This volume builds upon current trends in political anthropology toward the study of discourse, and of the alternate and subaltern voices that may challenge leaders of the status quo, and hegemonic traditions (Comaroff 1975; Scott 1985; Comaroff and Roberts 1981; Messick 1987). However, open articulation of opposition is often not possible in small-island societies, so we have expanded the consideration of discourse to include nonverbal media. In order to retain personal and group autonomy in tiny communities it is often necessary to avoid public and verbal discussions of differences. While earlier studies focused upon the structures of interaction (e.g., Evans-Pritchard 1940), the essays of our participants reflect current political emphases on the processes of political confrontation and adjustment, and on the individual (Vincent 1990; for example, see Godelier and Strathern 1991). The new Pacific countries offer contemporary insight into the processes of nation building (see Anderson 1983); the arts are a central arena of these confrontations (Babadzan 1988; Brandes 1988; Cannadine and Price 1987; Kuiper 1990).

One aspect critical to political expression through artistic means is the relationship of the individual and community to the larger society. Is the community marginalized in relation to the national society at large (see Ferguson et al. 1990), as in the case of the Maori (Mead 1990) or Cook Islanders (Loomis 1984) within New Zealand, or Hawaiians within the United States? Is it now part of a new Pacific Islander nation, such as the many Solomon Islands societies (discussed by Donner and Fitzpatrick in this volume; see also Feinberg 1990)? Or are both internal structurings and relations to colonial and postcolonial powers politicized (as Nero and Petersen note in their contributions)?

Most studies of the interrelation between the arts and politics center either in Africa (Mitchell 1956; Turner 1957; Sieber 1962, 1966; Thompson 1974; Ben-Amos 1989; Jules-Rosette 1984; Jewsiewicki 1989; Messick 1987; Nunley 1987; Arens and Karp 1989) or in Island Southeast Asia (A. Becker 1979; A. Becker and Yengoyan 1979; J. Becker 1979; Rodgers 1985; Keeler 1987; Peacock 1987; Ginn 1990). Early studies linking artistic expressions and political expressions mirrored the

functionalist and structuralist paradigms prevalent in anthropology at the time, seeing art as reflecting and maintaining existing structures (Firth 1951; Adams 1969, 1973; Lévi-Strauss 1963; Forge 1971; Merrill 1987; Munn 1971; Bloch 1974). Similarly, the masked dance performances were seen as a locus of social control (Sieber 1966). Analyses have only recently been moving toward perceptions that dance may serve to challenge colonial structures (Nunley 1987) or oppose members of the dominant society (Loomis 1984). Two early studies, however, documented indigenous peoples' ridicule in their arts of the powerful new whites (Lips 1966; Blackburn 1979).

Contemporary Arts and Politics of the Pacific

Action, Not Reflection: Negotiation of Relationships of Power

A number of themes emerged in our comparative discussions of the intersections of the arts and politics in each of the societies studied. One theme pervades all: in contrast with perspectives that see artistic productions as "set aside"—art for art's sake—we see art as an active agency through which people negotiate relationships of power, not just a passive reflection of such structures. Art speaks of, and draws the audience's attention to, contemporary disjunctions between past and present structures. The artist plays with change, trying on different perspectives, juxtaposing possible solutions, drawing the audience into the process of making sense of the complexities of contemporary experience. Art may be used nonconfrontationally, or as subtle confrontation that depends on the degree of cultural knowledge of the viewer, or as outright challenge. In the case of the warrior dances ubiquitous throughout the region, a particular dance performance may rapidly change from challenge to attack (see especially Schieffelin 1976); in 1992 Papua New Guinea canceled the annual Highlands Sing-Sing, apparently fearing new violence might erupt from the dances in an area not only torn by the difficulties of welding a new nation, but also in the throes of a gold rush.

In the 1970s Maurice Bloch used a linguistic model to explore the relation of formalization of speech, song, and dance patterns to issues of social control, hypothesizing that formalization supported the status quo (1974, 1975). Duranti's essay here extends this model through his study of the ways in which an oratorical genre that is formalized in one context, that of ceremonies, may in another context, that of the political *fono*, be characterized by "informal talk," thus allowing the negotiation

of present and future relationships, and the possibility of change. The same genre in one context is a showcase of polished performance, in the other an occasion for debate.

In her contribution to this volume, Billings uses a theatrical metaphor to contrast two types of performances in the Bismarck Archipelago: the long-established *malanggan* funeral ceremonies of the Tikana of New Ireland and the improvised “Johnson Cult” of the Lavongai people of New Hanover, who, beginning in 1964, voted for President Johnson of America to represent them in the newly formed House of Assembly of Papua New Guinea, in a continuing protest against the colonial and contemporary government.

Sinclair’s article analyzes the ways in which contemporary Maori writers are actively negotiating for participation in the processes of defining “Maori” in literary media. No longer leaving the field to Pakeha (white) writers, Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera explore the transformations of the Maori as they move from a rural base and the compelling issues confronting them in the urban settings of contemporary New Zealand.

Speaking Dangerously

One of the most powerful uses of artistry is to express dangerous sentiments, ones that could be suppressed if spoken outright, especially in cases where imbalanced power relationships exist both within and between societies. In this volume, such expressions range from challenges to the power structure through clowning and ridiculing the chiefs during ritually set aside occasions (Sinavaiana) to opposition or reflection during periods of social disruption (Nero), often at potential physical risk to the artists (see especially Hereniko in this volume).

The various artistic media are supremely suited to these challenges. By speaking through metaphor and analogy, by speaking with multiple levels that depend upon cultural knowledge to understand the deeper meanings, it is possible to say several things at once, putting the responsibility for decoding the message on the audience. The artist may be anonymous, as in the case of graffiti or billboards. He or she may be costumed to hide everyday identity, or cloaked in the identity of the spirits and thereby given ritual license to speak of dangerous matters. Art may thus be used to provoke viewers into considering the deeper implications of contemporary political issues, with the artist anonymously avoiding the physical repercussions of implying or stating a view contrary to official government policies.

Few ethnographers are also artists, which generally limits our analyses to the anthropological end of the spectrum. However, we are fortunate to have several artists in our midst who bring the special insights and vocabularies of multiple analytical perspectives to this volume: one dancer (Pinsker) and two indigenous poets/playwrights (Sinavaiana, Hereniko). Hereniko discusses why he chose to communicate through the medium of theatre after the 1987 coup in Fiji, in an interview following the full transcript of his play, *The Monster*, performed at the University of the South Pacific at that time.

*Creating and Maintaining Personal and National Identity,
Including Multiple Identities*

Art is used to express, construct, and communicate social identity (see Crawford 1981; Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Hanson and Hanson 1990). As such it is of vital importance in the creation of the new nations of the Pacific, an important arena for the confrontation and consolidation of past and present traditions. One strength of artistic media is their ability to carry multiple messages to multiple audiences. Performances can communicate new levels of state and national identity to outsiders while simultaneously conveying local district autonomy to insiders, as Petersen demonstrates here in his study of Pohnpeians' manipulation of different meanings in performances representing the newly created Federated States of Micronesia. The multiple messages conveyed through artistic media are especially suited to expressing these nested identities, consolidating at one level while at the same time differentiating on another.

Yet the power of artistic expression may be insufficient to consolidate popular sentiment in the absence of other integrative factors. Such can be seen in Howard's study of one Rotuman's abortive attempt to muster political support for Rotuman separation from Fiji by establishing a cultural movement relying upon arts and performances. To what extent can politicians walk the fine line of demonstrating autochthonous sensibilities while mastering contemporary sophistication where such sensibilities are polarized? Is it possible for new nations to achieve unity through diversity, creating new imaginations of nationhood through artistic and cultural expositions? The contributors to this volume explore these and other issues with regard to the Federated States of Micronesia (Flinn, Petersen, Pinsker), the Solomon Islands (Donner and Fitzpatrick; see also Feinberg 1990), and French Polynesia (Stevenson and Jones).

Resolving Structural Tensions

Art may also be used to defuse or resolve structural tensions. In the cases of new nations attempting to forge a national identity that retains cultural diversity yet incorporates its many societies, a mundane artistic medium may be chosen. Powerful media, such as ancestral masks so central to the societies involved that they could invoke and emphasize differences, are passed over as potential cultural insignia in favor of, for example, the woven media of everyday life. For example, baskets and mats produced throughout the region, yet culturally distinct, may without conflict represent a national identity (for a Vanuatu example, see Keller 1988, n.d.).

Education

An understudied aspect of political expression through the arts is the way they may be used for transmitting cultural knowledge. The power of instruction through dance and music is that it is learned through more than one sense (Kaeppler 1991b), may be only partially verbalized, and is learned by and communicated through and to the entire person, transcending Western body and mind dichotomies. An art form may be learned or performed individually, but its transmittal is more often the coordinated work of many performers and teachers, reinforcing Pacific community-based interactive styles (see also Tenzer 1991). Such styles are often counterposed to the more individualized emphases of colonial and postcolonial instruction. Dance instruction may be used by elders within a society to maintain traditional forms of education, which by demonstration contrast with Western educational institutions' emphases on individual attainment, written forms of transmission, and secular teachers (see especially the Petersen, Flinn, and Pinsker essays). Or one art form, such as weaving, may be read as a structural representation of a society's way of patterning physical and social relationships, which is also demonstrated in its architectural forms and the spatial relationships of buildings, and its social interactions (see Adams 1973; Rubinstein 1987).

Related to the last point, artistic productions may be important media for the continued transmission and reincorporation of local history into contemporary events (Pollenz 1950). Both the ceremonial paraphernalia and the performance carry cultural understandings from one generation to another, and their aesthetic effects enhance the power of this communication (Forge 1973a). Dance, chants, theater, paint-

ings, wood and stone carvings—any of these may be the most important form of local historiography, and their form may be continued today only through projects of artistic and historical preservation where their presentation would otherwise be banned by the church or secular bodies.

Drawing upon the importance of the visual element in indigenous communication, many Pacific nations choose artistic media such as posters for public health education campaigns. In her essay Fitzpatrick explores the multiple messages, both intentional and accidental, conveyed by Solomon Islands' family planning posters and the political contexts of this campaign in both the indigenous value system and that of the international planning community.

The Engendering of Art and Power

Throughout history, artistic productions have been used in the Pacific both as exchange and commodity, in competitions of prestige that themselves mark alliances and political relationships. Recent studies have focused upon the engendering of and balancing of power through the production of valuables (Gourlay 1975; Kirch 1984; Weiner 1989; Linnekin 1988) and the entire realm of the politics of gender in artistic production and performance (Messick 1987; Teilhet 1983; Shepherd 1987), though none have been done in the detail of studies about other regions (Drewal 1983). Gender issues are integral to a number of the essays in this volume, especially those by Jones, Sinclair, and Stevenson.

Future Directions

One major area of the politicization of Pacific arts not touched upon in this volume, and deserving a comprehensive comparative study in its own right, is that of cultural fairs and festivals (see Fischer 1989; also Brandes 1988). This would include the involvement of Pacific peoples in early Western world fairs (see Benedict 1983) as well as in local and pan-Pacific cultural fairs, most notably the Pacific Arts Festival. Developing from regional fairs organized to strengthen and transmit cultural practices long denigrated by colonial powers, such as dancing, the Fourth South Pacific Festival of Arts highlighted the contemporary political import and potential power of artistic challenges. This festival was scheduled to be held in New Caledonia (Kanaky) in 1984 to coincide with Kanaky independence (Babadzan 1988), to be witnessed by all festival participants. At the last minute, while some participants

were en route to New Caledonia, the French government postponed the festival. Held the following year on Tahiti in the French Overseas Department of French Polynesia, the delayed festival was boycotted by a number of Pacific Island nations in protest over continued French colonization of the Pacific.

Another area little studied is the use of song in political protest—a political medium well developed in other parts of the world (Jara 1984). For the most part, the analytical study of Pacific music has focused upon the use of chants to affirm or demonstrate or negotiate genealogical rights, to affirm particular regional histories (Parmentier 1988), or to assess the role of music in interpersonal relationships (Burrows 1963). Perhaps it is only in marginalized societies where ethnicity is politicized that song is used in protest, such as in Hawai'i (Tatar 1987; Stillman 1989; Osorio 1992). More likely, however, such study will await indigenous analysis, for anthropological literature is peppered with references to communications that “could not be translated,” such as Burrows's comments on dances performed for Americans visiting Ifaluk: “the texts of these were not given to me; the chiefs lied politely, saying they did not know them” (1963:60).

A related area, represented by Sinclair's essay in this volume but in general underanalyzed, is the richness of contemporary indigenous oral and written literary media. For example, within Micronesia, former Yapese Governor John Mangefel is noted for his satirical wit (e.g., Mangefel 1975), but until recently most Pacific literature courses in Western universities focused upon what outsiders had written about the Pacific, rather than the rich oral and written literatures of the peoples themselves (Subramani 1985).

There are two further areas not touched upon in this volume because they are the subject of a developing literature of their own—the larger political and economic issues raised by producing art predominantly for outsider consumption (Graburn 1976; Kirch 1984; Gewertz and Errington 1991) or in dual systems of production (Koojiman 1979), and the related politicization of museum exhibitions of “Primitive Art” (Mead 1984, 1990) and issues concerning the return of cultural artifacts to their country of origin (Greenfield 1989).

By analytically focusing here on the intersection between the arts and politics, we do not mean to imply that this analysis is inclusive, that the arts may in any way be limited to a political or instrumental dimension. However, since this intersection has been overlooked in Pacific studies, our original intent was to stimulate and support studies in this direction. There have been too few comprehensive studies focusing upon the

various media of artistic productions as an integral part of ethnographic research (but see Schieffelin 1976; Moulin 1979; Bailey 1985; Dark 1974). The success of such endeavors will partly require the continued involvement of Pacific Islanders in setting directions and identifying areas of study; for instance, anthropological literature had generally been silent on Pacific theater and clowning until Hereniko's and Sinaivaiana's doctoral dissertations (1990 and 1992a, respectively) and contributions to this volume. Another factor in the politics of Pacific arts has been the increasing participation by Pacific scholars in defining and articulating the academic field as well as national artistic policies (Foote et al. 1985). Further cooperation between outsider and local researchers, artists, and anthropologists promises a deeper understanding of both past and contemporary political actions through artistic media.

DANCING DEFIANCE: THE POLITICS OF POHNPEIAN DANCE PERFORMANCES

Glenn Petersen
*Baruch College and the Graduate School,
City University of New York*

Social life, as we all know, is complex. Meaningful human social activity often undertakes multiple tasks simultaneously. Activities intended to organize life within a community may at the same time mark boundaries distinguishing that group from others. A colleague of mine, an Orthodox Jew, tells of a man shipwrecked on the proverbial desert island. When he is at last rescued, he insists on showing off the two synagogues he has constructed. Why two? "Ah," he says. "This is the *shul* where I pray. And this is the *shul* I won't set foot in!"

My essay is about one of these multiplex forms of social activity: dancing. The people of Pohnpei use this art form to transmit several contrasting messages concurrently. Such messages would be difficult to communicate simultaneously in speech—Pohnpeian or English. But dance seems to convey them quite effectively.

A particular set of dances calls attention to Pohnpeian accounts of how their ancestors defended the island from invaders.¹ At the same time, these dances make it clear that very specific, local communities performed these acts of heroism. The dances communicate, simultaneously, both the island as a whole's history of defying outsiders and the local community's defiance of its neighbors.

Many—though by no means all—Micronesian dances are martial in form and spirit. Among other functions, they enable these otherwise peaceable people to remind both themselves and others of the continued value they place on military prowess (and their history of exhibiting it),

even under conditions of colonial rule by vastly more powerful nations. What I seek to describe here is by no means peculiar to Pohnpei; I have seen many Micronesians engage in similar performances. But I know something of Pohnpei's history, ancient and modern, and I know many of its dancers. It is in appreciating the historical nuance and the personal history that we most clearly see the meanings in the stories underlying the dances.

Pohnpei is the largest of the Eastern Caroline Islands. Its current population is probably in excess of thirty thousand. Before the first Europeans and their diseases arrived (ca. 1830), the population was perhaps a bit smaller; a long period of depopulation reached its low point at the turn of the century (Riesenberg 1968:6). Kolonia, the island's only town, is now the capital of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Many people from other Micronesian islands have come to the island to work for the FSM government; they live in or near Kolonia. Most Pohnpeian families continue to live on and cultivate their rural farmsteads, sending one or more members into town daily to work for the government, the island's main source of cash employment.

The town of Kolonia, the State of Pohnpei, and the Federated States of Micronesia as a whole each has an elected government and a bureaucracy. Outside of town, the island is still divided into five *wehi*, the "traditional" paramount chiefdoms, with hereditary chiefs and multiple lines of political titles of varying rank and status. These chiefdoms are also chartered as municipalities and have elected governments, but daily political life within them makes little differentiation between traditional and elective office.

Within these paramount chiefdoms are numerous local chiefdoms (*kousapw*). Furthermore, until the onset of colonial administration (in the 1880s), the paramount chiefdoms waxed and waned in number, size, and strength; certain areas of the island, such as Awak, where I work, have, since ancient times, claimed and often exercised effective autonomy from the larger chiefdoms in which they are now included. Political activity entails endless maneuvering within and between all these regions and chiefdoms. It is complex, and it is the stuff of social life on this rich and fertile island, where making a living takes up relatively little of people's time.

Mythohistorical Background

Because this essay is about dances, and the dances are about history, I must set the scene with background drawn from Pohnpei's mythology

and oral history. For my purposes here, I am not going to make distinctions between the various genres that recount the past; I discuss this problem elsewhere (Petersen 1990). What is relevant is that despite the existence of certain “authorized” versions of “Pohnpeian history” (e.g., Bernart 1977), there really is no version of the past acceptable to all the islanders. As David Hanlon points out (1988:25), the islanders maintain that “*Pohnpei sohte ehu*” (Pohnpei is not one). Political distinctions between and among the many communities are symbolized by a host of differences in mythology and customary observances (*tiahk*).

Pohnpei’s “modern” polity (that is, the current system of chieftainship) traces its roots to events purported to have taken place at least several generations before the arrival of the first Europeans and the start of written history on the island. These events in turn draw upon earlier episodes, running, in some versions, back to the beginnings of the island. In summary:

After the island itself had been built up out of the water by people who journeyed there from the south or east, and had been provided with food, shelter, fire, and so forth by other travelers, construction of a center for islandwide religious worship was undertaken. Led by two voyagers from the west, the people built Nan Madol, a vast complex of large-scale stone architecture, the ruins of which still sit off the east coast of the island. In turn, Nan Madol became the seat of a dynasty of tyrants, the Sau Deleus, who ruled the entire island. Eventually, local discontent and the interference of deities provoked an invasion by the culture hero Isokelekel, who—though son of one of these Pohnpei deities—had grown up in Katau, a legendary land to the east (often identified as Kosrae, but see Goodenough 1986).

Isokelekel and his troops overthrew the last Sau Deleur and presided over the dismantling of Pohnpei’s centralized political system. Following much deliberation, the island’s new and remaining leaders instituted the modern system of autonomous paramount chiefdoms. Today’s Madolenihmw chiefs trace their ancestry back (matrilineally) to Isokelekel, and the modern chiefdoms are organized around principles of decentralized government. Unlike some Polynesian polities, in which the chiefs claim to be foreigners, Pohnpeians believe their leaders to be indigenes; but they acknowledge that the political system itself, which they hold in the greatest respect (*wahu*, the term for respect, can in some contexts refer to the entire political system), is the product of a foreign intervention.

Two themes in these cycles are especially relevant in this context. First, we can distill out some political theory: originally, there was

anarchy; the people organized themselves by creating a system of centralized government; this deteriorated into tyranny; the tyrant was overthrown and his regime replaced by a decentralized set of locally autonomous chiefdoms. The modern polity, then, is in part the result of trial and error, as it were, and in part a product of deliberate, carefully considered decisions about the proper nature of government. It is viewed as now having withstood the test of time.

Second, we confront Pohnpeian ambivalence about the outside world. Little of great importance happens on Pohnpei without some sort of foreign intervention. But foreign influence serves merely to set off a chain of events over which Pohnpeians exercise control. Foreigners are not to be repelled from the island's shores; they are welcome but must be kept in their place—a situation that is described to them through the recounting of this history. (The island's contact and early colonial history certainly bear this out.)

The irony here is that many tales that recount *opposition* to Isokelekel's invasion are told in a highly celebratory fashion, and such tales are matters of great pride in the localities where they are alleged to have taken place. In this essay I refer to two of these; one comes from Awak, where I work, and the other is from U, the paramount chiefdom of which Awak is now a part.

Dancing Defiance

"Uh Likin Pehi en Awak"

The Awak tale, which appears in none of the published texts (though an obscure version appears in the "Silten manuscript"; see Petersen 1990), is often recounted in Awak—I have heard it many times. It is set during the time preceding Isokelekel's landing at Nan Madol, as his flotilla is making its way along the island's northern shore after an initial landfall on And, a small atoll a few miles off Pohnpei's west coast.

In this version, as in many others, Isokelekel's destination is not necessarily Nan Madol. He attempted a landing in Awak, sailing into its bay under cover of night. Modern Pohnpeians explain that their homes have traditionally been scattered about the hills (as they remain today) as a means of preventing surprise attacks on entire communities, but in this case the strategy nearly backfired: the invaders might have secured a beachhead without a fight. Fortunately, an *eni aramas*, a sort of ancestral spirit or part-human legendary hero, observed the invaders'

approach. He saw that there was no time to gather a force strong enough to repel them.

Acting quickly, he leapt onto a stone jutting up out of water “just beyond” (*likin*) Awak’s altar or place of worship (*pehi en Awak*). There he “stood up” (*uh*) and danced a ferocious war dance. Then he jumped down behind the stone and changed his palm-leaf skirt (in the past, well-dressed Pohnpeian men wore multiple layers of skirts). He again ascended and resumed his dance, repeating the performance over and over until the approaching invaders were convinced that a full-sized body of troops awaited to engage them in battle. Having lost the element of surprise, Isokelekel decided to seek a more vulnerable spot for his landing.

This story is called “Uh Likin Pehi en Awak” (Standing Up Beyond the Altar of Awak). The home where I stay when I work in Awak lies no more than fifty yards from the site of this great feat, and I have had the tale recited to me, in many versions, countless times. I have also watched Awak’s children perform chants and dances that tell of this episode.

In 1974–1975 the people of Awak, using American funding for materials and equipment, built a large, modern schoolhouse on a plot of land dredged up out of the bay, again just yards from the site of Isokelekel’s attempted invasion. When it was completed, the new school’s name was painted boldly across its facade, in large block letters: UH LIKIN PEHI EN AWAK SUKUHL.² Inside this schoolhouse the students are charged with studying English, world geography, and a host of other subjects. But each day as they enter, they are reminded of Awak’s history—and its history of resistance to threats from abroad.

Anyone passing this new building, Pohnpeian or foreigner, cannot help gazing at it. It stands out clearly visible at the water’s edge, unlike nearly everything else on this densely vegetated island. Its size, too, draws attention. While it makes obvious the impact of foreign money and learning, it simultaneously proclaims Awak’s proud heritage of effective resistance.

Pohnpeian children get their Pohnpeian history, civics, and art lessons via dance. They perform these dances on important occasions at the school—indeed, they performed a dance that told this story at the dedication of the new schoolhouse—and I first learned a good deal of what I know about Awak’s history while watching dances performed at schools. As I said, the Pohnpeians manage to harness foreign influences with their own cultural forms.

"Pidehk en Dolen Wenik"

Now, according to tales told a little farther east, a similar fate befell Isokelekel and his company as they headed on into U. Again they attempted a landing. In this case, another spirit man spotted them as he stood in front of a sharp peak known as the Dolen Wenik (literally, "the Hill of Wenik," the name of the U area in the time before the founding of the modern paramount chiefdom). The spirit man danced a bit, moved behind the peak, and then reappeared from the other side. Again and again he repeated this "circuit" (*pidehk*), making it seem that a large force waited behind the hill, ready for battle. Once more Isokelekel decided that his chances would be better elsewhere and chose to sail on, eventually coming ashore at Nan Madol and in time vanquishing the Sau Deleur in a battle commencing there. This story is called "*Pidehk en Dolen Wenik*" (Making a Circuit Around the Hill of Wenik).

In 1985 a group of adult dancers from U and Awak traveled to Tahiti to represent the Federated States of Micronesia at the Pacific Arts Festival. When they returned, they spoke animatedly about their reception there, proudly displaying copies of Pape'ete newspapers featuring their troupe. They were, they told everyone at home, the only dancers to perform in true island style: each of the dancers was liberally anointed in coconut oil (a ritually charged practice for Pohnpeians) and the women, as well as the men, danced bare-breasted. This latter action, still taken for granted on Pohnpei, clearly surprised and reportedly enchanted all who saw the Pohnpeian troupe perform.

The dancers were proud of having shown the rest of the Pacific that Pohnpeians, if not all Micronesians, cling tightly to their traditions. They are acutely aware of the mild disdain in which the Micronesians are held by other Pacific Islanders because of their close political ties to the United States. They chose, then, to make a clear statement about Pohnpei's independent spirit.

Most notable in this context, however, was the name the group selected for itself. The dancers called themselves the "*Pwihn en 'Pidehk en Dolen Wenik'*" ("*Pidehk en Dolen Wenik*" Group). They were the Federated States of Micronesia's official representatives to the arts festival, but clearly represented themselves as Pohnpeians, not simply "Micronesians." At the same time, they focused the symbolism of their name (and on Pohnpei few things bear more symbolic power than names) on a local event—the local community's successful resistance to

the invading Isokelekel—and in that sense they were not simply “Pohnpeians.”

Isokelekel is as close to an islandwide culture hero as we can hope to find on Pohnpei. Tales about him mesh into nearly every aspect of life (Ward 1989:64). Nonetheless, the island’s official goodwill ambassadors chose a name that reflected local ascendancy over the hero of the whole. In any report about the Tahiti performance, either within Pohnpei and Micronesia or out and about in the broader world, the story of how Isokelekel was repelled by U is proclaimed. Never mind that the outsiders do not know what they are being reminded of, everyone on Pohnpei knows, and everyone on Pohnpei knows what is being displayed to the world: U defiant.

Before I move on to the final dance performance I intend to discuss, I want to make two small points. The first begins as a minor aside, really, but it has underlying significance. I recall as a child reading stories that remarkably parallel the “Uh Likin Pehi en Awak” and “Pidehk en Dolen Wenik” tales. One was set in China (and presented as a Chinese folk-tale). A city with a small defense force was under siege by a much larger army. Following someone’s inspiration, the city’s tailors worked around the clock for days, sewing set upon set of uniforms in various colors and styles. Then the city’s soldiers marched on the ramparts repeatedly, changing into new uniforms with each circuit. Eventually their enemies were convinced that the city was defended by a vastly superior force and lifted the siege.

Another tale came from America’s Civil War. A small force (and I no longer recall if it was Confederate or Union) outwitted a larger force by marching ’round and ’round a hill. Their opponents’ view was limited to a small number of troops at one time passing a break in the trees; they saw a seemingly endless procession marching by. Convinced that they were overwhelmingly outnumbered, the onlookers withdrew. (I have also read that Mussolini employed a similar stratagem to impress Hitler when the Führer visited Rome.)

The ruses themselves are widely employed, at least in imagination if not on the field of battle, and the tactics are by no means peculiar to Pohnpei. Indeed, they appear in Stith Thompson’s motif index of folk-tales as Motif No. K2368 (1955–1958, 4:496). What stands out about the Pohnpei tales lies in the context of the telling. The tales celebrate local victories over both foreign invaders and the island as a whole. As such they communicate simultaneously both the islanders’ ability to defend themselves against outside aggression *and* local communities’ capacity

to resist centralizing tendencies within the island's confines. The tales are chosen as highly appropriate topics for dance performances precisely because they so effectively communicate defiance to both outsiders and neighbors—no mean feat.

A second notable theme running through these tales lies in their portrayal of Isokelekel's progress toward Nan Madol and the Sau Deleur. The primary recorded versions (Bernart 1977; Hadley 1981) tell this history from the perspective of Nan Madol and Madolenihmw, the paramount chiefdom that succeeded it in eastern Pohnpei. In these presentations, Isokelekel heads directly to his confrontation with the Sau Deleur. In the Awak and U versions, however, he tries repeatedly to effect a landing along the island's north coast and arrives at Nan Madol only after having failed elsewhere.

The sequence of events described in these variant tales parallels the earlier mythohistory leading up to the founding of Nan Madol itself. Two brothers from the west, Olsihpa and Olsohpa, try repeatedly to begin work on the proposed ceremonial center. They start in Sokehs (on the west coast), then move on to various sites in Net (on the northwest coast) and U (in the northeast) before finally settling on the site where they achieve ultimate success, on the island's extreme eastern shore.

The emphasis given to this sequence of false starts is, in fact, the source of my vision of the Pohnpei people's deliberate ambivalence about dealing with foreigners. They see (indeed desire) that the outside world has an impact upon their lives. But they also seek to control this impact and shape it to their own purposes. Their myths, when examined at length rather than in summary fashion, reduce the stature of these strangers and make them pliable: the mighty Isokelekel, for instance, is cowed by the sight of *kotop* palms (*Exorrhiza ponapensis*), whose white inflorescent branches he thinks are skirts, mistaking the trees for giants. In each of these two great myth cycles, the foreigners are required to move slowly around the island, undergoing a series of unsuccessful trials before finally achieving success at Nan Madol. Pohnpeians place them where they deem appropriate. The strangers are transformed by these experiences; they are no longer totally foreign, though they never become fully Pohnpeian, either.

Many tales are told in Pohnpeian song and dance performances. Not all are as political as the two I have selected to explore here. But it is no coincidence that these two are stories that I—a foreigner, an American—have often heard. Nor is it coincidence that the large Awak schoolhouse, paid for by the United States, and the Pacific Arts Festival dance troupe, underwritten by the FSM government, are christened with

names that conjure up defiant spirits. These performances allow Pohnpeians to transmit complex messages quickly and clearly.

"The Sokehs Rebellion"

The last dance performance I shall discuss draws upon recent, rather than mythological, history. In 1910, a large number of the Sokehs chiefdom's people (most of them from Sokehs Island, which is separated from the rest of the chiefdom on Pohnpei Island's mainland by a narrow, mangrove-choked channel) rebelled against the German colonial administration. They killed the governor and some of his aides, then laid siege to the garrison. In time the Germans mounted an invasion, reinforced by Melanesian troops from Rabaul and three modern gunboats. The rebels were driven from their redoubt atop the great Sokehs mountain, overlooking Kolonia town, and harried across the interior of the island. Some were captured, some surrendered; ultimately all were taken prisoner. Fifteen leaders were shot and buried in a common grave and more than four hundred people were exiled, first to Yap and then to Palau, for more than a decade. Northern Sokehs was occupied by outer islanders and only the southern area known in general as Palikir remained populated by ethnic Pohnpeians (Ehrlich 1978).

Today, most Pohnpeians exhibit curious ambivalence about this episode. Though it must be reckoned a stunning defeat, it is much more widely remembered (or at least referred to) than the Madolenihmw, Net, and Sokehs victories over the Spaniards in the 1880s and 1890s (Hanlon 1988:148–197; Hempenstall 1984). This is in part because of the epic song and dance composed to record the rebellion. It may also partly be traced to the story's importance as a cautionary tale.

When Pohnpeians fought the Spanish, they succeeded in doing exactly as their mythohistory instructs them: they allowed the Spaniards to remain on the island (mostly hiding inside their fort), having an impact but never exercising much control over life there. The Germans, however, proved entirely too strong for Sokehs; the rest of Pohnpei had foreseen that this would be the case. Instead of finding nonviolent ways of avoiding German domination, and thereby preserving Pohnpeian autonomy in fact if not in appearance, the Sokehs people saw their community destroyed. Defiance is a great deal more attractive when it succeeds.

Throughout the ensuing years, the rebellion against the Germans has remained an important topic of discussion for both Pohnpeian intellectuals and foreign scholars. Accounts of it have been written by Gartzke

(1911), Hambruch (1932–1936), Bascom (1950), Ehrlich (1978), and Hempenstall (1978). Local interpretations of its origins and significance continue to evolve (Petersen 1985:17–18). And the epic song and dance describing it continue to inform much of modern Pohnpeian aesthetics. I have heard or seen bits and pieces of it a number of times but it was not until 1983 that I had an opportunity to see a performance of the epic in its entirety. It was an unforgettable experience.

In June 1983 the Federated States of Micronesia conducted a plebiscite on its Compact of Free Association with the United States. The FSM national government, which had negotiated this compact, was eager to see it approved. The compact provides the Federated States with internal self-government and approximately US\$1.4 billion over the course of fifteen years in return for American oversight of foreign affairs and a “security” arrangement that in fact allows the United States perpetual control over anything it decides is a security issue.

The ethnic Pohnpeian people (as opposed to outer islanders and other Micronesians residing on the island) were not convinced that the compact would provide them with the autonomy they sought. They were troubled by many aspects of the arrangement, including the power it vests in the FSM national government, the possibility it raises of another war being fought in the islands (much of World War II’s Pacific Campaign was fought in Micronesia), and its general vagueness about the matter of who was sovereign (that is, who holds the *mana* [Pohnpeian *manaman*], the Americans or the Micronesians). Ethnic Pohnpeians voted by a nearly two-to-one margin against the compact, carrying Pohnpei State, but because theirs was a minority position within the Federated States as a whole, they did not prevail. In an advisory portion of the ballot, they called instead for independence (Petersen 1984, 1985, 1986), an option they still pursue.

Four days after the plebiscite I attended the yearly two-day convocation of Pohnpei’s Roman Catholic adult lay sodality (the *Pwihn en Mwanakapw oh Peinakapw*), held in Sewiso, Sokehs. There, groups representing congregations from every part of the island vied with each other, presenting song, dance, and sketches, many of which had religious themes. There were two showstoppers.

The first of these was a long theatrical performance drawn from the Book of Exodus. Its focal point was the repeated request to the Pharaoh, “Let my people go!” A group from Wene, in Kiti, performed it. Coming only four days after Pohnpei had rejected free association with the United States and called instead for independence, no one had trouble grasping its relevance.

The second was the only full performance of the epic “Sokehs Rebellion” song and dance I have ever witnessed. The people of Lewetik, a nearby area, put it on. Many of these performers are descendants of the rebels. Like the Wene group who did the Exodus, they had been practicing for months—the months leading up to the plebiscite, when the compact was the main topic of everyday conversation.

There are seventeen verses in the song, with narration between each. There is much repetition in the course of the dance, and several breaks for movement of the dancers from one formation to another. The performance was a long one. As with most formal Pohnpeian dancing there were lines of sitting women and standing men and women (much like the Samoan *siva*). Several of the men were animated, affecting a traditional clown role, but most of the dancers appeared impassive, even bored, during the performance. This is, however, merely *kanengamah*, the Pohnpeian practice of disguising emotion and interest. A young woman dancer, a daughter of the family I have lived with on and off for fifteen years, told my wife how much pleasure the dancing gave her, how excited she was; I would never have guessed this from the completely detached look on her face.

The performance was given in a feast house, during a downpour. Every inch of space inside was jammed, and scores of people stood outside in the rain. Everyone strained to catch each word, everyone seemed enrapt. But for the song, the dance, and the rain hammering the tin roof, I heard no sounds, a rare circumstance in as raucous a place as Pohnpei.

While Pohnpeians place an extremely high value on disguising and hiding feelings, the words of the song and movements of the dancers carried everyone present through the full sweep of the tragedy. The roundabout phrasings and circumlocutions that are so often a part of everyday Pohnpeian discourse are absent in much of this song, as when the German governor is asked, as he lands in Sokehs on the fateful day, “Do you want to get killed?” Later, during the siege of the Sokehs mountain where the rebels have established themselves, the Pohnpeian phrase *pohn Dollap*, “atop the Great Mountain,” drones repeatedly, with great force, setting the scene for the coming battle between the two forces. When the naval bombardment drives the rebels from their stronghold atop the mountain, their chief asks, “Why do you flee from the Great Mountain?” One of the retreating men replies graphically, “What am I that I should cut/Heavy artillery?”

The performance reaches its mournful climax when the rebel leaders are led to the execution ground, tied to a fence, and shot. The leader of

the rebellion, Soumadau, something of a culture hero in his own right, asks permission for his men to put on their good clothing, "and then we will die." His brother, Lepereren, responds that their palm-leaf skirts are good enough: "These are the clothes of men."

When the men are dead and buried, the drama ends with the simple imperative, "Think about Jesus crucified."³ The audience burst into sustained applause. I confess that I was overwhelmed. I had never expected an opportunity to see such a performance. Coming as it did just days after the Pohnpeians had defied the United States and the FSM's national government, this dance of defiance was doubly powerful, doubly meaningful.

Let me return to the theme of this essay. Sokehs's act of defiance was the act of a localized group of people, like the group performing the dance. It was the people of Sokehs Island (and not even the entire Sokehs chiefdom) who rebelled, not the Pohnpeian people as a whole. They were the ones defending their prerogatives against German encroachments. Current ambivalence in Pohnpei about the uprising makes this clear. Although an act in the finest Pohnpeian warrior tradition, the uprising was ill-starred and, apparently, ill-advised. It is not easy to be unabashedly proud of the episode.

When the Sokehs people perform the epic song and dance, however, they are able to transcend the story's drawbacks. While the tale recounts resistance to foreigners, in the vein of all the accounts I have been citing, it simultaneously tells of their grandparents' decision to defend their community, to act on their own, to assert both the right and the responsibility to act autonomously.

Pohnpeians have managed to defend themselves not by banding together as a centrally organized unit, but through individual acts of individual communities. This, of course, goes thoroughly against the grain of Westerners raised on political classics or in the Euroamerican tradition that draws upon these classics. Americans grow up on "*E Pluribus Unum*" (Out of Many, One) and "United we stand, divided we fall." The *fascies*, the bundle of reeds signifying that in unity there is strength, was borrowed from the Romans not only by Italy's Fascists: it appears on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., as well.

On one level, then, the Sokehs drama is simply about Sokehs; it belongs to Sokehs, as it were. But on another level, it draws on the format of most Pohnpeian historical drama. When we view this as Pohnpeians speaking to one another, we see them emphasizing the importance of local autonomy. But the examples they use show their people asserting this autonomy against foreigners, thus enabling them to com-

municate very clearly to outsiders that they are fully capable of defending themselves against most outside aggression, and that, when they cannot, they still have tactics for ensuring their eventual success. In this manner, they send multiple, complex messages simultaneously. I think this trick has some important theoretical significance for modern ethnic and nationalist politics.

“Save the Last Dance for Me”

The people of Pohnpei dance for a variety of reasons, many of them having to do with sociability and entertainment. The early reports of European visitors to the island describe dance performances that sound much like those one sees on the island today. Over the years a number of other dance types have been added, including the *lehp*, a favorite. This is a martial dance done in imitation of foreign sailors marching in formation, named for the “left” in “left, right, left.” (Because of the heavy influence of Boston missionaries and New England whalers, English provided most of the the precolonial nineteenth-century loan words.)

Although some outsiders think that the *lehp* corrupts traditional Pohnpeian aesthetics, the Pohnpeians have always looked to the outside world for new ideas. Their dance repertoire continues to grow, and it continues to be militant in character. Since most dancing is done in performance of one sort or another, the topics chosen for entertainment purposes also serve multiple other purposes; some of these are political.

When a political—that is, militant—theme is chosen, several tasks are again undertaken simultaneously. The messages concern both the whole of Pohnpei against the outer world that potentially threatens it and the Pohnpei people against one another. At the risk of stretching a metaphor too far, let me borrow the chorus of an old Drifters’ hit.

Just don’t forget who’s taking you home,
And in whose arms you’re gonna be.
So, darling,
Save the last dance for me.⁴

Precisely because the Pohnpei have been dealing with outsiders since the beginnings of their own mythohistory, they know that foreign influences and forces shall come and go. But other Pohnpeians, they assume, will always be there. Their priority, then, is to assure that (to mix metaphors unconscionably) the center *cannot* hold. Dance performances speak first to the rest of Pohnpei about local autonomy, and only then

about Pohnpei defiant. This insistence on the utility of placing local political needs ahead of grander schemes has a small but honored corner in political theory. It was once articulated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The Government of Poland* (1985).

Rousseau wrote *The Poland*, as it is known, in 1771–1772, in response to the Confederation of Bar's request for help in revising the Polish constitution. His effort came at the time of the first of the three partitions, which removed Poland from the map until World War I. Rousseau foresaw the Poles' fate, and his advice to them was meant to promote their survival as a people at a time when nationalism had not yet appeared as a coherent cause (indeed, *The Poland* is among the earliest documents in the history of modern nationalism). Many of his recommendations to the Poles run parallel to the political theory underpinning Pohnpeian political dance, that brilliant union of the Muses Clio and Terpsichore.

Rousseau saw clearly that the Poles were in no position to repel the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian empires that threatened them. The solution, he believed, was to "establish the republic in the Poles' own hearts . . . those hearts are, to my mind, the republic's only place of refuge" (Rousseau 1985:10). Love of the homeland "may not save you from bowing briefly under the yoke," but "it will, if it keeps on burning in your hearts, burst into flame one day, rid you of the yoke, and make you free" (ibid.:86). This, he recognized, could only be accomplished by preserving Polish culture. "You must maintain or revive (as the case may be) your ancient customs." If they would "see to it that every Pole is incapable of becoming a Russian . . . , Russia will never subjugate Poland" (ibid.:14, 11).

But Rousseau's program was grounded in political as well as cultural theory. At the time, it was widely held that Poland's decentralized political traditions made it vulnerable. Not so, Rousseau argued. "Whatever you do, your enemies will crush you a hundred times before you have given Poland what it needs in order to be capable of resisting them" (ibid.:11). Instead, the Poles should build on their great history of confederation, which he termed a "political masterpiece" (ibid.:60). He urged upon them "a confederation of thirty-three tiny states," since "almost all small states . . . prosper, simply because they are small" (ibid.:76, 25).

Poland could not resist its neighbors if it merely imitated them. "I should like Poland to be . . . itself, not some other country; for only by being itself will it become all that it is capable of being." In this way the Poles would keep their government and liberty "alive in their true—their only—sanctuary, which is the hearts of Polish citizens" (ibid.:80).

Like Rousseau, the people of Pohnpei—or at least its leading philosophers—recognize that decentralization promotes good government. Certainly their mythology specifies that Pohnpeian civilization is grounded in the autonomy of the chiefdoms. For millennia, Pohnpeians managed to control the foreign influences on their lives—or so they tell themselves. They experimented with political forms and found that the autonomous chiefdoms both allowed the people to govern themselves in small, face-to-face communities *and* guaranteed this freedom from external controls.

Although Pohnpeians were originally advocates of federalism, they have come to believe that this new, centralized nation-state poses a danger to their traditions of local autonomy. They see no value in imitating the American model or in becoming “Micronesians” rather than “Pohnpeians.” They keep their government and liberty alive in their hearts—and in their dances.

When they dance, they remind others of their traditions of defiance. In doing so, they continue to uphold the even greater importance of defiant local communities. It is a complex aesthetic but a sensible one. And, if Rousseau and the Poles are any guide, it may yet prove to be a very workable course of action.

NOTES

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1. In 1985, after Ponape had officially changed its name to Pohnpei, Governor Resio Moses and his staff explicitly told me that the correct way to refer to the island’s people and their language was “the Pohnpei” and “Pohnpei language.” They reiterated this position in 1987. In 1990, however, I noticed that official materials originating in the Governor’s Office used “Pohnpeian.” When I spoke with Governor Moses regarding this, he explained that he had bowed to popular usage: “Pohnpeian” is now official. With this essay, therefore, I mark my own shift to “Pohnpeian” from the adjectival form “Pohnpei.”

2. In addition to recalling memories of this Awak triumph, the school’s name also evokes the name of Pohnpei itself, which refers to the initial construction of the island out of the seas—“built upon an altar,” *pohn pehi*—which, in turn, was set upon a tiny fragment of coral sticking up out of the surface of the water. Moreover, Awak is now a part of the U (the current spelling of which is itself a political maneuver) paramount chiefdom (about which its people feel some ambivalence) and the school’s name conveniently begins with the paramount chiefdom’s name.

3. The biblical reference in this final passage, like the Exodus performance, reminds us of the continual weaving of foreign themes into accounts of Pohnpei's history. I have used Paul Ehrlich's powerful, and evocative, translation of the chant (1978:169–182), and I gratefully acknowledge the quality of his work.

4. "Save the Last Dance For Me," by Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman, copyright 1960 by Progressive Music.

CELEBRATIONS OF GOVERNMENT: DANCE PERFORMANCE AND LEGITIMACY IN THE FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

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Many anthropologists writing about the political implications of artistic performances in Oceania have realized that these performances are polysemic, communicating multiple messages simultaneously (cf. Petersen's essay, pp. 13–28 in this volume; see also Schwimmer 1990). This polysemy presents a challenge: it is difficult, when trying to be verbally analytical about nonverbal and/or polysemic sorts of messages—when using discursive symbolism to describe nondiscursive symbols, in Susanne Langer's terms (1942)—to avoid appearing to reduce the meaning of an artistic production to the narrow range of meaning that supports a particular point we are trying to make in the context of our own argument, be it functional, structural, symbolic, or political.

Therein lies both the danger and the payoff in case studies analyzing the relationship between art and politics. In viewing an artistic performance as a political statement, we are in danger of reducing the meaning of the performance to fit our own society's notions of politics as a struggle between proponents of ideological positions or programs. Conversely, if we as ethnographers recognize and learn from the polysemic messages about communities and the relationships between them that contemporary Pacific people are creating through their art, we are led to a broader understanding of politics as the negotiation of relationships between different kinds and levels of community—face-to-face village, ethnic, islandwide, state or province, national, regional, international, perhaps even community of class or of generation. It is precisely this

politics of community that was addressed by several participants in the 1990 Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) symposium on "The Arts and Politics," including Donner, Petersen, and Flinn, whose essays also appear in this volume.

The data I seek to understand are dance performances given during official government functions within the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) from 1985 to 1989.¹ Since the FSM constitutional government was established in 1979, many of the governmental units within the Federated States have also held constitutional conventions and established new constitutional governments to replace those that formerly operated under municipal or state charters. As of 1992, new constitutions have been ratified for all four FSM states—Yap, Pohnpei (formerly Ponape), Kosrae, and Chuuk (formerly Truk)—as well as for municipalities within Kosrae and Pohnpei states. Ratifications of these newly drafted constitutions and the installations of the new governments have been marked by celebrations with food and dancing and singing performances; these celebrations often involved hosting outside guests. Other official government events have also provided occasions for performances, such as the signing of a foreign-aid agreement between Yap State and Japan in September 1986, and Pohnpei State's hosting of an Association of Pacific Island Legislatures meeting in April 1986.

The kinds of dances performed at these occasions range from traditional forms that show a continuity with precontact times, through "marches" or hornpipe-type dances and Japanese folk dances, to the type of pan-Pacific dance that Adrienne Kaeppler has characterized as "airport art" (1977). The data presented in this essay should be considered together with the data Flinn and Petersen present in their essays on Pulpap and Pohnpei (both islands within the Federated States of Micronesia) so that we may come to some conclusions about the kinds of messages FSM dance performances send about the relationships of local communities to broader ones, and hence about the legitimacies of various national, state, and local governments. The data indicate that the kinds of modifications made to traditional dance forms and the use of less traditional dances in multiethnic contexts are related to what messages the presenting community is sending to whom about who "we" are and about the relation of "us" to outsiders. Furthermore, in multiethnic contexts the messages *not* sent are also significant: keeping esoteric meanings of performances within a community is a way of preserving local autonomy while acknowledging participation in a broader political context.

Dance in Contemporary Micronesia: Constructions of Community

The dancing that I observed at government celebrations in the Federated States fits Milton Singer's notion of "cultural performance" (see MacAloon 1984:1): framed performances that allow members of a culture or society (in the term I will use here, a community) to define and dramatize themselves both to themselves and to outsiders. At these dance performances in municipal as well as state and national government contexts, the most salient and problematic part of that definition was how the presenting community related to other communities, including the "imagined community" of the nation, to use Benedict Anderson's phrase (1983). This relation could be one of encompassment ("we are part of *X*" or "we are made up of *a, b, c*") or of opposition ("we are *X* and not *Y*"), or as Petersen suggests in his contribution to this volume, both at once ("we are a part of *X* and not *X*"): for example, the localities of Awak and Palikir, both with pasts as semi-autonomous chiefdoms, are part of Pohnpei and yet distinct from it. Thus, boundaries between "us" and "them" are not only marked, they are negotiated and presented as complex and multivalent, unlike the simple, line-on-a-map way we Americans tend to think of boundaries.

One would expect to find negotiation of community boundaries implicated in the dance presentations connected with the implementation of municipal and state constitutions and of treaties such as the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia (although we find this situation in other contexts as well, as Petersen and Flinn show). Such documents are themselves concerned with the political/legal dimensions of community boundaries—boundaries of sovereignty and authority, which were explicit points of contention in the drafting of all these documents. For example, during several of the Pohnpei State municipal constitutional conventions, delegates expressed the desire that these municipalities function as more-or-less autonomous polities within the state and the nation.² The movement in Pohnpei State to replace municipal charters with constitutions also says something about the relations of the municipalities to each other—once the people of one municipality wrote a constitution, voters in the others wanted their own constitutional conventions too; this same "keep up with the Joneses" dynamic was reflected in planning the constitution-related celebrations. Each municipality wanted to display its hospitality and put on as good a show as the others. Each one invited officials from the FSM, the state, and the other

municipalities and planned the food and entertainment to impress the guests. In such contexts, there is no such thing as “mere entertainment.”

The desire to let one's own community members and outside guests have fun at a government celebration is part of a community's political strategy for creating support for that government. Accordingly, if what delights the audience is pseudo-Tahitian, airport art-style dance with fast hip movements, in some cases that is what is provided (assuming it isn't felt to contradict important messages about community identity). In examples below, airport art-style dance appears in multiethnic, culturally heterogeneous communities, such as the Federated States of Micronesia, Sokehs Municipality, and Kolonia Town, Pohnpei.

In the following accounts of dance performances, it is important to note that, in most cases of accompanying chants, very few in the audience knew the meanings of specific words. Chanting in Micronesia often employs esoteric, archaic, or elliptical language interpretable by only a few people; however, a chant's general idea or story may have wider currency within the community of origin. In any case, all these dance performances were partially directed to outsiders, constructed to present “us” to “them” using dance movement and costume to communicate beyond language barriers. Indeed, in governmental contexts such as these, the ability of dance to do this is what makes it a valued resource. The performers in turn see themselves as reflected in the appreciative eyes of the outside guests and come away with increased pride in their polity.

Most FSM islands have dance traditions that include several different genres, recognized by the practitioners as ranging from archaic to recently developed. Dances are usually performed to songs or chants. The more ancient genres utilize chants with archaic or esoteric language whose referential meaning is understood by only a few, or even has been lost completely. For example, Goofalan of Maap Municipality in Yap, a recognized authority on Yapese dance, said that he does not know the meaning of the archaic language used in *gabngeg*, a very old and now rarely performed genre of Yapese dance. The people of Sapwuahfik say they do not understand the language used in their chants that date from before the 1837 massacre (see below). Dance masters readily acknowledge outside influence in certain genres of dance (e.g., the Yapese *barug* is said to originally come from the atolls east of Yap), and outside elements like “disco” moves and electronic keyboard music are currently incorporated into new dances.

Recently developed dance genres (like the Pohnpeian *lehp*) can be performed to songs recently composed. The language employed is more

readily understandable, but it too is often elliptical, referring to events understood fully only in the community of origin. For instance, the Pohnpeian dance song about the 1910 Sokehs Rebellion that Petersen discusses in his essay preceding this one contains the titles of several key participants in the rebellion. People in Lewehtik, the community that presented the dance, know the kin and clan affiliations of these men, but that information is not in the song itself and is little known outside the families involved.

The repertoire of movements drawn on in Micronesian dances include head, arm, and hand movements, and some pelvic and hip movement (though nowhere close to the extent found in Tahitian or Cook Islands dance). Some dance genres are performed seated or contain portions performed seated, some are performed standing with little leg movement, and others use marching steps and brush-steps in shifting line formations. The movement repertoire varies from genre to genre (e.g., the Yapese *gaslaw*, “love dances,” use much pelvic movement), and from island to island. Each island has a more-or-less distinct style of movement that involves the repertoire of movements as well as the energy flow and typical postures. Yapese dance, for instance, uses stronger hip accents, and a common standing posture has the pelvis tilted back so that the posterior protrudes; Pohnpeian dancing uses the arm and hand for subtle accents, with the torso commonly slightly forward and concave (see Bailey 1985 for excellent descriptions of Pohnpeian dance movement).

In asking what is communicated by movement itself, beyond the language of chant or song that accompanies it, one answer is that a distinct movement style makes a statement about a unique collective identity. In addition, the fact that unison dancing requires coordination and rehearsal makes unison performance an index of the viability and political cohesiveness of the presenting community. Most of these dances are done in groups with all dancers or several subgroups within the dance moving in unison.

As far as particular gestures go, many of these dances do incorporate elements of mime (iconic communication), but there is no elaborate repertoire of conventional gestures (i.e., gestures with arbitrarily assigned meanings) comparable to the *hasta mudra* of classical Asian South Indian dance or to modern Hawaiian *hula*. Examples of mime (iconic) elements include: (1) in the *tayoer*, Yapese “begging dance” (see below), grasping motions of the hands were coordinated with asking for goods; (2) in the last verse of the “Sokehs Rebellion” dance, which speaks of Jesus crucified, dancers stretch out their arms horizontally to

signify a cross; (3) the quivering of the arms and coconut armbands described below for the Mwoakillesse warrior dance is movement that mimes a conventional threat gesture. Much of the arm and hand movement in these dances, however, is apparently used to create and punctuate rhythmic patterns rather than as conventional symbols or as icons.

Notes on Dances at Selected Political Celebrations in the Federated States of Micronesia, 1985–1989

The following brief accounts of dance performances at seven political celebrations in the Federated States of Micronesia are each prefaced by background information on the presenting communities and concluded with a summary of some of the messages the performance sent about the presenting community and its relation to other communities. A more general, comparative discussion of the data presented follows the seven specific accounts.

Celebration of Installation of New Government under the Kolonia Town Municipal Constitution, Pohnpei (September 1985)

Kolonia Town is the main port on Pohnpei Island and the capital of Pohnpei State. In 1985 it also held the FSM national government offices; those offices were moved to a new capitol complex in Palikir, Pohnpei, in 1989. Kolonia's population of about six thousand (1985 Pohnpei census) is the most heterogeneous in the Federated States: residents include ethnic Pohnpeians;³ families from atolls in Pohnpei State and the Mortlock Islands; people from Chuuk, Kosrae, and Yap states or elsewhere in Micronesia who work for the government or private businesses; expatriates from the United States and other countries who work for the government; and Filipino and Korean construction workers. Many of these people do not participate in the Kolonia Town government, as they are registered to vote in another municipality, state, or country.

The September 1985 ceremonies for the new Kolonia Town government also celebrated the dedication of the new, two-story Town Hall; the ceremonies were held outside the building. Dances were performed by groups of young people representing the Kolonia Town Council election districts; the dances reflected the diversity of ethnic groups living in Kolonia, which was also commented on in the speeches. Itor Harris, president of the Kolonia Town Constitutional Convention, said in his

speech (spoken in Pohnpeian, my translation): “We treasure our beginnings in many places and can come together in one government and unite in proclaiming cooperation, liberty, tranquillity and a good life for everyone.”

Residents of one Kolonia district performed dances from the Philippines (Filipino construction workers have come to Pohnpei and brought their families). Another district presented a group of Kiribati young men performing some of their dances. Three different districts presented young women and girls performing the same dance, a dance that I was told is from Palau.⁴ The “Island Girls,” a group of young women, many of whom are of outer-island or mixed parentage and who are directed by a young woman of mixed American and outer-island parentage, performed the kind of popular Hawaiian/Tahitian dancing seen at tourist performances in Hawai‘i (where the director studied).

One group performed a line dance to American “disco” music, using interweaving lines of young men and women; the movements were a combination of “disco” moves and movements derived from the kind of Pohnpeian dance called *lehp* (see below). The more traditional genres of Pohnpeian dance were absent; many ethnic Pohnpeians (as opposed to outer islanders) do live in Kolonia, but most of them vote for and participate in the governments of the municipalities in which they own land, elsewhere on the island.

Seen as an ensemble in the context of the speeches, these dances portrayed Kolonia Town as a community of immigrants, a pluralistic community formed by people of disparate origins cooperating together. The dances also showed Kolonia Town people as eclectic and not hide-bound by their own traditions but willing to borrow from each other and from other communities with which they come in contact, like Palau and the United States.

Celebration of Implementation of Sokehs Municipal Constitution
(August 1985)

Sokehs Municipality, southwest of Kolonia Town, has both an outer-island population and an ethnic Pohnpeian population. The outer-island population is concentrated on Sokehs Island, which is separated from the Pohnpei Island mainland by a narrow channel, and in Sekere, an area on the mainland. The ethnic Pohnpeian population is concentrated in Palikir, which is south of Sekere on the mainland. The ethnic Pohnpeians killed or deported to Palau after the 1910 Sokehs Rebellion against the Germans (see Petersen’s article) had land on Sokehs Island,

which the German administration then gave to migrants from Mwoakilloa, Pingelap, and Sapwuahfik atolls. Sekere is largely inhabited by families originally from the Mortlock Islands. Many of the children of the exiled rebels, when they returned to Pohnpei, settled in Palikir.

Sokehs Municipality has established an annual Sokehs Rebellion Day as a municipal holiday in memorial to the heroic sacrifice of the fallen martyrs; however, the historical consequences of the rebellion have very different implications for the Sokehs people who are outer islanders than for the ethnic Pohnpeians. Many of the outer-island families originally received land on Pohnpei as a result of the rebels' exile, so they benefited from the rebels' tragedy.

The Sokehs chief magistrate in 1985 was Mortlockese, as was the speaker of the council, and I did hear some grumbling from ethnic Pohnpeians about this. Unlike Kolonia Town, Sokehs is more than a modern municipality: it is constituted as a Pohnpei Island *wehi* (traditional paramount chiefdom) with a Nahnmwarki (paramount chief). Eligibility for the paramount chieftainship is through matrilineal descent, and the mother of the present Nahnmwarki of Sokehs was indeed of the proper royal subclan; his father, however, was Mortlockese (he had also been paramount chief, appointed by the Japanese;⁵ he married his wife to help to legitimate his rule). The present Nahnmwarki's wife is not Pohnpeian, but Mortlockese, and I also heard ethnic Pohnpeians complaining about that ("*E rot*," they said, "She is dark/unenlightened").

The Nahnmwarki of Sokehs was present at the ceremony for the implementation of the newly ratified Sokehs Constitution. The ceremony included speeches by the chief magistrate, Pohnpei State and FSM government representatives, and the chairman of the Sokehs Constitutional Convention's Committee on Tradition and Civil Liberties. Interspersed with the speeches, a singing group from the Mwoakillese village on Sokehs Island performed a song praising Sokehs composed for the occasion; church choirs from Sokehs Pah and Sekere also sang. Several of the speeches gave different versions of the historical background relevant to the new Sokehs municipal government. The speeches from the chief magistrate and the officials representing the national government (including a man with close familial ties in Palikir, related to the committee chairman) contextualized the new Sokehs Constitution in terms of the continuing progress toward self-government initiated by the Congress of Micronesia; these speeches also emphasized the importance of cooperation among all the inhabitants of Sokehs. The aforementioned chairman, on the other hand, spoke about the past holders of

the Sokehs paramount chieftainship, and implied that the Sokehs Rebellion and the consequent resettlement of outer islanders at least temporarily destroyed Sokehs as a legitimate Pohnpeian *wehi*. These speeches gave contrasting views of the primary source of legitimacy for Sokehs, as traditional Pohnpeian *wehi* or as multiethnic, electorally based municipality; this tension was also reflected in the dance program presented after the speeches. It is important to note that the tension remained latent, however, and was never explicitly discussed.

The main presentation in the dance program was a group of dancers from Lewehtik in Palikir, men and women approximately from their late teens through late middle age, performing a *lehp* (marching dance) set to a song commemorating the tragedy of the Sokehs Rebellion, the same dance Petersen discusses in his essay. *Lehp* is a type of dance that is considered to be of more recent origin than the traditional standing and sitting dances performed to chants. *Lehp* movements appear to have been influenced by sailors' hornpipes and military marches (Bailey 1985). The language of the "Sokehs Rebellion" song that the dance was set to is not archaic, but it is elliptical and was performed without any explanation for those in the audience (e.g., outer islanders) unfamiliar with it. The men wore hibiscus-fiber skirts; some women wore orange cloth skirts and others wore hibiscus skirts, with orange tube tops covering their breasts.⁶

A little girl who had studied in Hawai'i then did a dance with Tahitian movements to calypso music, the kind of dance Kaeppler has called airport art.

The Sokehs celebration of the implementation of their new Constitution displayed more elements of Pohnpeian custom than did the Kolonia Town constitutional celebration: *sakau* (kava) was brought in. However, the seating and serving arrangements of traditional Pohnpeian feasts were not followed: a buffet of food was served after the speeches, with guests lining up to help themselves from dishes laid out on a table—a style of serving Pohnpeians call *tehpel en Hawaii* (Hawaiian table). Although traditional titleholders were served first, food was not distributed in the ranked way that is customary at traditional Pohnpeian feasts; as a result everyone, not just high-ranking Pohnpeians, had plenty to eat (the outer islanders on Pohnpei sometimes complain that they don't get enough to eat at ethnic Pohnpeian-style feasts).

In the political context of the constitutional celebration, the performance portrayed Sokehs as both Pohnpeian *wehi* and multiethnic electoral municipality, with implicit tensions between the two types of community and the associated types of legitimation. The FSM officials who

spoke supported the vision of Sokehs as a multiethnic municipality where the families of immigrants have the same status as any group of its citizens, while the dancers from Lewehtik asserted the primacy of ethnic Pohnpeians in constituting the history of present-day Sokehs.

*Celebration of Installation of New Government, Sapwuahfik Atoll
(October 1985)*

Sapwuahfik Atoll (formerly called Ngatik) is ninety miles south of Pohnpei Island and in 1985 could only be reached by ship. The atoll has nine islets; only one, Ngatik, has permanent residences. Ngatik Islet is divided into five sections.

Sapwuahfik's history includes a major, tragic discontinuity: in 1837 the crew of a trading ship, including unscrupulous British and American seamen and their Pohnpeian allies, killed all the adult men on the island (see Poyer 1985, 1988). The present population is descended from the surviving women and children, the foreign seamen, the Pohnpeians that came during and after the massacre, and subsequent castaways.

Many Ngatikese today live on Pohnpei, in Kolonia or Sokehs. Since ship passage to Sapwuahfik is relatively inexpensive, there is much visiting between Pohnpei and the atoll. The delegates to the Sapwuahfik Constitutional Convention included some Ngatikese who reside most of the time on Pohnpei; other Ngatikese living on Pohnpei choose instead to participate in the Kolonia Town or Sokehs municipal governments.

The specially scheduled ship that brought non-Ngatikese guests and visiting dignitaries to the October 1985 celebration of the installation of the new municipal government also brought many Ngatikese residents of Pohnpei who wanted to participate in the two days of festivities.

Groups from each of the five sections of Ngatik Islet performed, competing against each other in dance as they did in displaying coconuts and taro, the competitions being part of the festivities. Some of the dances performed were set to chants in the old Ngatikese language spoken before the 1837 massacre; the chants are learned phonetically, as no one understands all the words nowadays. These dances form the genre the Ngatikese call *wen Ngatik* or *sei tiktik*. Other dances were of the hornpipe type, similar to what the Pohnpeians call *lehp*, and were done by both men and women waving scarves. The Ngatikese call this dance genre *wen Pohnpei* and explained proudly to their visitors that they had introduced these dances to Pohnpei during World War II. Certain Ngatikese, however, told me that the dances are originally Pohnpeian (they may have been introduced by the Pohnpeians who settled

on Ngatik after the 1837 massacre), but that Ngatikese do them exceptionally well and became known for them on Pohnpei during the war.

Each section thus performed with a dual identity: representing itself and hoping to outdo the other sections in the competition, while at the same time representing Sapwuahfik as a whole to the visitors from the FSM government and Pohnpei State's other islands. The dances displayed the checkered history of Sapwuahfik (see Poyer's work), demonstrating their premassacre heritage as well as the sailor-influenced marching dances.

All the dances performed are frequently done by Ngatikese on Pohnpei as well as Ngatikese on the atoll. When I lived with a Ngatikese family on Pohnpei in 1979, I observed the young girls at play doing the same *wen Ngatik* dances I later saw at the government celebration, and the girls explicitly identified these dances as Ngatikese and not Pohnpeian.

Performed at an officially sanctioned event on Sapwuahfik rather than in the context of children's play on Pohnpei, the performance of these dances was a community-to-community (municipal government to state government) statement about Sapwuahfik as an autonomous polity, rather than a marker of ethnic-minority identity within a dominant Pohnpeian population. The performances made a declaration of community boundaries congruent with the language of the new Constitution of Sapwuahfik.

*Celebration of Installation of New Government, Mwoakilloa Atoll
(June 1987)*

Mwoakilloa Atoll (formerly Mokil) is ninety miles east of Pohnpei Island. It has three islets, only one of which is inhabited. The inhabited islet is divided into three sections, or "chapels." The Protestant Congregational church dominates the social structure of Mwoakilloa; atoll residents converted to Christianity in the early 1870s, after visits from representatives of the Boston-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and from Pohnpeian converts (Hanlon 1988:134). Before the coming of the Protestant missionaries, Mwoakilloa had a very bloody period in its history, fighting invaders from the Marshall Islands and also fighting over chiefly succession; one Mwoakillese told me that during that period the paramount chieftainship was usually gained through assassination.

Pockets of Mwoakillese settlement on Pohnpei exist in Kolonia and in Denpei village on Sokehs Island. The Mwoakilloa Constitutional Convention included delegates from both these areas. Mwoakillese on Pohn-

pei have done well in school and many have achieved positions in state and national government. These salaried people have sent money and goods back to the atoll, so that the atoll boasts many concrete houses and other cash-bought goods, as well as an airstrip.

Both ship and airplane brought Mwoakillese and outside guests to Mwoakilloa from Pohnpei for the celebration ceremonies, which included speeches, a church-sponsored brass band from Denpei, and dances. As on Sapwuahfik, there was a competition between sections in prestations of coconuts and taro (and, in this case, sacks of rice as well). Five sections were represented: the three divisions of Mwoakilloa's main islet and two Mwoakillese communities on Pohnpei (Likinkel in Kolonia and Denpei).

In the dance portion of the program, presented after the speeches, young girls from the atoll performed several dances. One was a dance learned from the Japanese and involved waving of a Japanese flag. Another, set to a chant about rolling up mats, was done seated with boards on laps, similar to the fashion of the Pohnpeian seated dances. The third was a pseudo-Tahitian dance. Very young boys then performed a warrior's dance, with their mothers beating the rhythm on biscuit tins.

The Protestant Congregational church on Mwoakilloa generally forbids dancing, allowing public performances only on rare occasions such as this. The last major dance performance had been after World War II when the Smithsonian Institution sent people to make a film. The warrior's dance in particular is considered unenlightened and fear-provoking, being part of a bloody past when Mwoakillese and Marshallese fought. The fact that very young boys did it "defused" some of the fearsome aspects.

From what was explained to me, the warrior's dance (done as the grand finale) had required a long period of rehearsal, preceded by the necessity of rounding up the older people who could reconstruct the dance from its last performance after the war. The young boys performed seated. White sheets were draped around their laps and their upper arms. Each boy's wrists, head, and neck were decorated with elaborately cut coconut fronds—part of the difficulty of the dance was to move the arms in such a way that the coconut-leaf armbands would quiver. One could see how a fully grown man performing this dance could indeed strike terror in his opponents.

As in similar situations on other islands, the Mwoakillese apparently have an ambivalent attitude about this part of their history, both proud of the heritage of fierce warriors and feeling that it is part of their dark,

unlightened, pre-Christian past. It is significant, however, that they chose to stage the warrior's dance as part of the ceremony legitimizing their new municipal government.

The entertainment also included church-choir singing and the Denpei church-sponsored brass band. The performances at the Mwoakilloa celebration, then, included Christian and pre-Christian elements, recognizing both as sources of power for the Mwoakillese community. The community on the atoll, as opposed to the Mwoakillese on Pohnpei, presented itself as the main preserver of Mwoakillese heritage through the dances it presented, particularly the pre-Christian warrior's dance. The Mwoakillese on Pohnpei were recognized as part of the greater Mwoakillese community through their participation in the competitive prestations of produce and through the choir singing and band, but the directors and stars of the show were the atoll Mwoakillese.

Performance of Yapese Dances at the Signing of a Foreign-Aid Agreement between Yap State and Japan (September 1986)

Yap State, which includes the four connected islands of Yap proper as well as outlying atolls, is considered to be the most traditionally oriented of all the FSM states, both by Yapese and other Micronesians. There is truth to this assertion, as the Yapese have not gotten caught up in the same wave of municipal constitution-writing fever that has gripped Pohnpei and Kosrae (Chuuk will probably also have municipal constitutional conventions soon; it got a late start due to delay in ratifying a state constitution). However, operation of the Yap proper polity changed significantly during the colonial period: villages and village alliances used to be the most salient units of Yap-wide politics, but municipalities rather than individual villages are now becoming more important as units of political organization. The three most highly ranked municipalities of Yap—Tamil, Rull, and Gagil—together provide the tripod that “supports” Yap proper.

The Japanese consul present on Yap to sign an agreement for a US\$4-million, Japanese-funded fisheries project requested a performance of Yapese dance. Three groups performed, one each from Gagil, Rull, and Tamil. Young boys from Tamil did a *gaslaw* (love dance); formerly these dances were practiced by young men in private, and girls were not supposed to watch, although they did try to sneak glances through the bushes. The sexual aspects of *gaslaw* were “defused” somewhat in this performance by the fact that most of the boys were very young, from age four to young teens: the boys' pelvic thrusts amused the audience.

The audience was mainly Yapese, except for the Japanese consul for whom the performance was staged.

The Gagil group were women, including the wife of the speaker of the Yap State Legislature, who performed a *par u buut* (sitting dance). Most of the dance was performed seated, using head, arm, and torso movements; the final portion, though, was done standing. The dancers chanted; the dance began not with a unison chant, but with one dancer beginning the chant and others joining in in turn so that the sound swept from the middle to the ends of the line of dancers, and then from one side of the line to the other. The effect was quite spectacular; this was the most technically demanding performance I saw while in the Federated States of Micronesia. I was told that the *par u buut* are among the most difficult dances in the Yapese repertoire to perform.

The group from Rull, another women's group, performed a *gamel'* (bamboo-stick dance); this is similar to the stick dances found in Chuuk and the atolls east of Yap, with the dancers hitting each others' sticks in rhythmic patterns, using shifting formations. The Yapese use more hip motion in these dances than I have seen elsewhere in Micronesia.

The dances were performed in the contemporary version of Yapese traditional costume, with the bare-breasted women wearing thick hibiscus-fiber skirts dyed in brightly colored stripes, with extra layers cut short over the hips to accentuate the movement. The boys were in traditional *thu* (loincloths). Necklaces, armbands, and headdresses were fashioned of coconut leaves and flowers. The dancers also had body and facial painting; I was told that turmeric was traditionally used but now people use commercially available cosmetics (sometimes glitter as well).

The older people in the family I stayed with on Maap gave me a list of genres of Yapese dance that included five other genres in addition to the three listed above. The contexts for performing these dances have changed. Formerly, dances were performed at *miitmiit* traditional exchanges or at the completion of men's houses. All the traditional performance contexts they told me about involved competition between linked pairs of villages—one group from each village would compete, both performing an example of the same genre. Now the dances are rehearsed for Yap-wide celebrations such as Yap Day (March 1) or United Nations Day, and the dancing groups can represent a municipality (as in the performance for the consul) as well as a village. Thus, the dances now support the notion of a Yap-wide community in contrast to the former emphasis on the village.

FSM Presidential Inauguration, Kolonia, Pohnpei (May 1987)

A celebration that took place in an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty, this inauguration represented the first shift of the FSM presidency.

The president is elected by the FSM Congress from among the four statewide, four-year-term senators, one from each state.⁷ Tosiwo Nakayama of Chuuk, the first president of the Federated States of Micronesia, had held the office for two terms, the first eight years of the FSM constitutional government, 1979–1987. Uncertainty about who would succeed him as president added to the uncertainty that had surrounded the implementation of the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia. The FSM national government designated FSM Independence Day as 3 November 1986, but the U.S. decision at that time not to seek approval of the termination of its U.N. trusteeship for the Federated States and the Marshalls from the Security Council made the acceptance of FSM sovereignty by other Pacific nations problematic.⁸ FSM national officials had talked some about an independence celebration, but no one had seemed to be able to plan far enough ahead.

Shortly thereafter, in March 1987, voters from each state elected their four-year-term senator. Many Pohnpeian voters felt that the president to succeed Nakayama should come from Pohnpei. However, the man who won the four-year seat from Pohnpei was not perceived to be popular with other senators. By May, when the new FSM Congress convened to elect the president, tensions on Pohnpei ran high. Threats from angry Pohnpeians, though, did not deter the FSM Congress from electing John Haglelgam of Yap State as president. In the week between Haglelgam's election by the Congress and his public inauguration (on Pohnpei Island), there were several (thwarted) attempts to burn down the inauguration stand.

At the inauguration celebration for Haglelgam, two groups performed: the aforementioned "Island Girls" from Kolonia Town, Pohnpei, performing airport art-style dances, and a group of young Yapese and Yap outer-island students from the Community College of Micronesia, male and female, who performed bamboo-stick dances, like the *gamel* described above. (On Yap proper I was told that the more recent *maas*, marching dances, are the only genre of dance that men and women can perform together.) No traditional or even marching-style Pohnpeian dances were performed.

Dignitaries representing the United States, Japan, and Korea attended the inauguration, as well as representatives from the four FSM states and neighboring island territories. The inauguration stand was decorated with paintings of symbols of the four states: Yapese stone money, Pohnpeian kava, Chuukese chiefs' masks, and the "Sleeping Lady" of Kosrae, a mountain formation that looks like two breasts. The dance performances made a much weaker statement about FSM unity, however, than did those paintings. The airport art dances conveyed a sense of the FSM's share in a Pacific identity but little sense of connection with Micronesian heritages.

*"Unity Dance" at Independence Day and Dedication Ceremonies,
FSM Capitol Complex at Palikir, Pohnpei (November 1989)*

The performances at the 1987 inauguration should be contrasted to the two-day celebration held 3–4 November 1989 to mark the opening of the new FSM capitol in Palikir, Pohnpei, and the third anniversary of FSM Independence Day. The 1989 "Independence Day and Dedication Ceremonies" (the title on the program) at the new FSM capitol complex in Palikir was the first large-scale public celebration of FSM Independence Day. And large scale it was, with many foreign dignitaries in attendance; by that date, thirteen nations had recognized FSM sovereignty and many sent representatives. Government officials and traditional leaders from all four states joined national officials in a program that included speeches, singing performances, and approximately fifteen dance performances, presented by groups from U, Kittir, and Palikir (Pohnpei Island); Sapwuahfik and Pingelap atolls (Pohnpei State); Kuttu, Pwuluwat, Ettal, and Namoluk atolls (Chuuk State); Tamil and Rull (Yap); and Kosrae. These performances provided a way for ordinary FSM citizens to actively participate in the celebration and not just be a passive audience. For the non-Pohnpeian participants the occasion provided an opportunity to travel to Pohnpei and see the new capital for themselves. An FSM official originally from the Mortlock Islands of Chuuk, who was one of the key organizers of the event, told me in 1990 that he felt that many participants in the event, particularly the Chuukese he spoke with, had been deeply moved by the event and had experienced an increased sense that the FSM government is their own.

Of the dances, one of the most intriguing from the perspective of the politics of community was presented by a group of FSM government officials from Yap State who performed a chant and dance listed on the program as "Unity Dance, National Government." The officials, from

both Yap proper and the outer islands of Yap State, were joined in the all-male performance by young men and boys from the Yapese community on Pohnpei. Yapese live on Pohnpei because they are working for the FSM government or going to school or are with family who are doing so. They have a men's group and a women's group who meet regularly and plan communal activities. They brought a dance master, Goofalan of Maap, from Yap to Pohnpei to compose a chant and dance specifically for this occasion and teach it to them.

Unlike the other performances, which were presented with little explanation, former Yap State Governor John Mangefel introduced the dance. The transcription of his speech introducing "The Unity Dance" follows (given in English, transcribed from FSM Public Information Office videotape; small portions marked by parentheses were inaudible due to background noise):

This dance is newly composed, composed by an old man from Yap and it's based on what happened in World War II and on forward to times when we had a good agreement with the United States and word was spread and all the states look at it, read it, discuss it, and like it and finally, they say it's good. And then finally, they sign it. (. . .)

It also describes the majestic mountains of Ponape, people of Ponape, and things about Ponape in there, it describes the island—if you know how to speak Yapese you will understand; but we can always translate later if you wish. (. . .)

[The dance refers to a story] about a great navigator who was supposed to have come from Heaven and sailed throughout the area and finally he settled down in a place called Mal. Mal is the name of this island in the Yap language. We think Nan Madol is the navigator's house. He describes the house made of stone and describes that from his own yard he can catch tuna and all kind of things. We say that's the house of that navigator.

And so we (. . .) [describe] the sailing of each canoe, to our sailing now of President, Speaker, Vice President and Speaker, (. . .)

So much for the description of the dance. It's our custom that before we perform a dance we pay respects to the leaders of the place we are performing that dance so (. . .) we are going to pay our respects to the national government and to the four states (. . .)

The dance performance followed, beginning with the men seated and chanting and continuing into a standing dance, with the dancers gesturing with their arms and hands and stepping in unison while continuing to chant. The men and boys wore coconut-frond armbands and necklaces and flower headdresses. The old-style Yapese loincloth, which bares much of the buttocks and includes a bundle of hibiscus fibers brought between the legs to the waistband, with the ends left hanging down in front of the pelvis where they sway with the motion of the dancer (although the pelvic thrusts were not as pronounced as in *gaslaw*), provoked some amusement in the audience, more used to seeing its government officials in suits than in that sort of costume.

In speaking to Yapese about this dance I found out that Mangefel's explanation was only part of the story. The passages he referred to are indeed in the chant, but it also includes some asides directed at the Yapese audience. Willy Gorongfel, the FSM Congress public information officer, has been working on an English translation of the text of the chant that he shared with me.

The Yapese title of the dance is "Palkir U Mal," which does not mean "Unity Dance." Mal, as Mangefel said, is the name used in the old Yapese chants for Pohnpei, *u* is "in"; Palikir is the Pohnpeian word for the area where the new capital is, but *palkir* in Yapese, Gorongfel said, means something like "sliding back," with the connotation of dissipation. So the title is a pun, meaning "Palikir in Pohnpei," referring to the place and occasion for which the dance was composed—the dedication of the new capitol complex, and also "Sliding Back in Pohnpei," referring to the behavior of the young Yapese men who come to Pohnpei to work and find other things to do besides work. The beginning of the chant is a very poetic and profound commentary on World War II and the changes it brought to Yap and the rest of Micronesia, but later in the chant there is a line that translates: "The six-pack—the food of Mal."

This dance performance, then, is a particularly striking example of polysemy; its officially proclaimed meaning was concurrent with other meanings accessible only to the performers and a few audience members. This example demonstrates the connections between polysemy, multiple audiences, and multiple communities. The message of FSM unity and support for the legitimacy of the national government was conveyed through the publicly announced gloss on the dance, together with its tangibly perceivable nonverbal aspects: here was a group of government officials who had obviously spent much effort in rehearsal and costuming in order to entertain an audience that included not only foreign and FSM dignitaries, but the many inhabitants of Pohnpei who

attended this public event. The Yapese in the audience received this message, but they received others as well, in-jokes poking fun at the behavior of their own young men and perhaps at Pohnpei society.

Performers and Audiences: Multiple Interpretations and Multiple Levels of Community

In the same way as the “Unity Dance,” the other performances outlined above mean different things to the audiences corresponding to different levels of community. Furthermore, the composers and directors of these performances know that (at least at some level of consciousness, though they may not always be able to talk about the processes of artistic construction) and send several messages at the same time directed at these various audiences. The Ngatikese performers performing *wen en Pohnpei* representing a particular section of the islet in the dance competition were trying to show the competence and skill of their section to the other Ngatikese, and at the same time demonstrating to the Pohnpeians the skill of Ngatikese in general at *wen en Pohnpei*. And as participants in the performances taken as a whole they were demonstrating to all of Pohnpei State and the Federated States of Micronesia, and to themselves as well, the viability of Sapwuahfik as a political community, a community capable of coordinating and hosting a major event.

Life isn’t all politics, and neither is dance; at a level below community identity, individuals may have their own agenda in mind while performing. Throughout Micronesia, performers put coconut oil on their skin because gleaming, smooth skin is attractive, particularly to members of the opposite gender. I am reminded of a man originally from Mwoakilloa, speaking of his participation in the dance performance that was filmed by the Smithsonian after the war: in the film, he said, you can see a young girl enthusiastically clapping—that girl was later to become his wife. Sometimes, to the performer, it’s an audience of one that really matters.

We can connect the relations between multiple audiences and multiple meanings to Roland Barthes’s notion of “readerly texts” that are “galaxies of signifiers” with no one authorized interpretation (1974:5; see also Schwimmer 1990:9); just as, for a written text, there are as many interpretations as there are readers, for a performance there are as many interpretations as there are audiences. Audiences, and hence interpretations, are not always neatly separable. As an individual may be a member of more than one audience at once, equating here audience with encompassing/encompassed community (he/she may be a

Yapese and an FSM citizen; a Ngatik section member, a Ngatikese, and a citizen of Pohnpei State), he/she can hold several interpretations, recognize several levels of meaning, at the same time.

A further complication of polysemy is that heterogeneous elements in the work itself can contribute to it. Bakhtin used the term "heteroglossia" to describe the multiple styles, registers, and points of view found in the modern novel (1981; see also Duranti's essay in this volume). In Micronesian dance performances, dancing and chanting together form a kind of heteroglossia—esoteric or unfamiliar language used in a chant is one sort of register, physical appearance and movement is another. These produce differences in accessibility of meanings to different audiences.

The audience/performing-group relation models the relationship between encompassing community/encompassed community: the performers, in gauging the effects of their performance and striving for better ones, attempt to look at themselves through the eyes of the audience(s) and thus become joined in a larger community with their audience.

The political implications of the performer/audience relation, however, depend on culturally specific assumptions about the nature of this relationship (on spectatorship and "end-linkage," see Bateson 1972:100–103, 155–156). Performing can be regarded as submissive, as something one does in order to please or placate a dominant audience, like a slave dancing for her master or like Scheherazade weaving her tales to keep her head on her shoulders. Contrarily, performing can be perceived as a dominating activity, with performers full of pride and power parading before a respectful and maybe even cowed audience. In characterizing Pohnpeian dances as "defiant," Glenn Petersen has hit on something apparently true of Micronesia in general: that Micronesians traditionally see dance performers in a dominant rather than submissive relation to their audience. This is evident in the traditions of warrior dances, found throughout Micronesia; in the stick dances, which develop physical skills useful in fighting; in the uses of dance in nonmilitary competition, as in *miitmiit* in Yap and the competition between sections of Sapwuhfik described above.

There is a genre of Yapese dance called *tayoer*, usually translated as "begging dance": now rare, *tayoer* were formerly performed at *miitmiit* ceremonial exchanges between pairs of villages. Through chant and dance, the dancers of one village would ask the other village for specific items. Goofalan and his wife taught me an example from a *miitmiit* held about 1918, in which the little girls who performed the *tayoer*

asked the men of the other village for ten bottles of liquor for each of their fathers. They received ten cases of liquor (forty-eight bottles each, with extra bottles on top); members of the village receiving the request had sent a messenger to watch the rehearsals (apparently a common tactic) of the other village so that they would be prepared to fulfill the request and not be shamed.

Although our own notions of “begging” might lead us to construe the “begging” performers’ role as submissive and inferior, this kind of “begging” is more like “demanding,” and thus supports rather than contradicts the thesis that Micronesian dance is traditionally defiant or assertive rather than placating or submissive. The performers, not the audience, had the greatest control over the exchange and its implications for the respective prestige of the villages; the village on the receiving end of the *tayoer* had the most to lose if it could not meet the request, which is why it needed to send a messenger to the rehearsals.

I saw (and participated in) other examples of dance as assertive competition at Pohnpeian feasts and family kava gatherings: sometimes women dance to the *tehnpele*, the rapid and syncopated percussive hitting of the stones used to pound kava against a basalt slab base that occurs at the end of ceremonial kava pounding. A woman, usually a mature woman rather than a teenager, will stand up and dance, heavily accenting her hip motions. Then some people in the audience yell, “*Siai! Siail!*” (Compete!) in an effort to encourage other women to get up and shake their hips—“dueling hips” rather than “dueling banjos.” This also happens in the processions that end *lehp*-style dances, these days often performed to electronic keyboard music played as the dancers march out in a line, with the female dancers turning from side to side and dropping their hips on the accented beats. Sometimes one woman will begin exaggerating her hip movements and to cries of “*Siai!*” other women will follow suit. Occasionally men join in as well, in a self-parodying and burlesque style.

In reflecting on the bravura of these Pohnpeian women and the audience responses to their challenging hip-dancing—in contrast to the very different emotional ambiance surrounding airport art-style, pseudo-Polynesian dance performances—I have come to understand what I find disquieting about the political implications of the latter. The relation between audience and performer in Pacific tourist-oriented performances, modeled on Western ideas of compliant native women performing for powerful colonialist men, is the opposite of the Micronesian traditional view of the performer as dominant. (That doesn’t mean, of course, that Pacific Island women can’t co-opt the Western model to

serve their own purposes.) From this perspective, it makes sense that when Micronesians stage the airport art-style dances the performers are young prepubescent and adolescent girls, not the mix of generations seen in the more traditional genres. The young girls are powerless and have less to lose by participating in a performance context that so defines them. This is not the place to explore the connections between sexuality and fertility, power, and postcolonial gender relations implicated in these performances, but I would like to note that for the mature Pohnpeian women flaunting their hips in response to a challenge of "*Siai*," the sexuality is definitely there, a reliable source of intrinsic power and confidence—not a last resort of the powerless.

The political implications of the audience/performer relation in airport art-style dance also makes sense of the fact that there were no airport art-style dances on the 1989 FSM Independence Day program, in contrast to the 1986 FSM presidential inauguration ceremonies; the greater power—marked by the older average age and more prestigious status (e.g., government officials) of the dancers as well as the choice of genres—embodied in the 1989 performances reflects the greater legitimacy gained by the FSM as a federated nation, in the eyes of its own citizens and the outside world.

The use of the term "federated" here is intended to signify the importance of the political and cultural identities of the constituent states and municipalities within the Federated States of Micronesia. In a paper examining Micronesian political rhetoric (Pinsker 1991), I have concluded that invocations of unity in FSM national political rhetoric have little content in terms of shared commonalities. What is shared, paradoxically, is respect for diversity: "To make one nation of many islands, we respect the diversity of our cultures" (FSM Constitution preamble). This same proposition is demonstrated by the structure of the performance program at the 1989 Independence Day ceremonies. Each dance was representative of a particular community, with its own identity, its own history and customs, and its own view of its relationship to the national government. Even though the dance sponsored by the Yapese national-government officials was referred to in English as the "Unity Dance," it expressed a specifically Yapese perspective on that unity.

Conclusions

In an attempt to synthesize the data presented in the above examples, I conclude that dance performances sponsored by governmental units that encompass several ethnicities—the FSM national government, the

Kolonia Town and Sokehs municipal governments—include various groups performing different dances without any attempt to play on comparisons between them. The performances are all in the same frame but otherwise unrelated. The relation of encompassment (groups x , y , and z are contained in A) is stated primarily by the frame, occasionally commented on within individual dances (e.g., the “Unity Dance,” obliquely by the “Sokehs Rebellion” dance), but not expressed through connections made between the dances. Connections between the dances could have been made if, for example, the presenters of the 1989 Independence Day celebration had grouped all the stick-dance performances together or had ordered the performances in terms of the eras of history that they represented. This did not happen, however. Furthermore, the audiences for the FSM and Kolonia Town celebrations did not have the background knowledge needed to make detailed connections between the individual performances, and it was not given in the introductions to the dances. That has an implication for the kind of encompassment that is being expressed—encompassment that permits autonomy and distinction to each constituent group within a loosely articulated framework.

Contrarily, the performances sponsored by more homogeneous governmental units—Sapwuahfik and Mwoakilloa municipalities described above, Petersen’s and Flinn’s examples in their essays—do demonstrate connections between the dances at a given performance; and these connections provide commentaries on the community’s history and the parts of the communal identity that are problematic.

On both Sapwuahfik and Mwoakilloa the genres of dances performed reflect the turbulent contact histories of these atolls. Taken together the dances show a community that has changed over time, each period in the past bringing to the present its legacy, whether it be of sailor or warrior, Japanese or precontact aboriginal. The relationships between these legacies can result in conflicting images in the community’s representation of itself—the images of Mwoakilloa’s warrior heritage and its current Christianity, or the image of premassacre Sapwuahfik reflected in the old chants versus the heritage of the sailors reflected in the hornpipe-influenced *wen Pohnpei*—but these images are combined, through the collective performances, into a coherent whole.

The Sokehs Municipal Constitution program can be considered an intermediate case. Though probably unintended by municipal officials, there was an evident message given by the deep local roots conveyed by the “Sokehs Rebellion” dance contrasted to the airport art-style dance and the absence of any dance presentation by the outer

islanders. Sokehs is both a Pohnpeian *wehi* (unlike Kolonia Town) and multiethnic municipality; the performances taken together with the speeches reflect the tensions inherent in that situation.

The coherence in the performances sponsored by the more homogeneous communities comes from knowledge shared by the audience of community members about the meanings of the dances and their history, shared knowledge that is communicated through the performances themselves and through commentaries on them to the wider audience of outsiders present at municipal government-sponsored celebrations. Knowledge in Micronesia, however, is not always shared; power is gained through the withholding of knowledge (see Pinsker 1991; Falgout 1984). This has to be considered when examining the relations between multiple audiences and the multiple meanings of dance performances. We cannot assume that performers or composers are attempting to fully communicate their own understanding of a dance to a wide audience; in fact, there may be benefits in not doing so. The in-jokes directed toward the Yapese in the "Unity Dance" were not meant for the national audience.

In describing the teaching of Pohnpeian dance songs to performers, Kim Bailey reports, "It is also customary to withhold part of the meaning or deliberately impart incorrect information" (1985:127). This has been noted as a general characteristic of the teaching of Pohnpeian lore (see Petersen 1982; Falgout 1984). A clear example of this pattern elsewhere in Micronesia is provided by the teaching of *itang*, the highly metaphoric and allusive poetic language used by Chuukese masters of political rhetoric (see Goodenough 1951). *Itang* is sometimes explicated in ordinary language when it is used in a speech, but Goodenough reports that there are several levels of understanding of *itang* and only the simplest level is explained in public (pers. com., 1991). The more esoteric levels are for only *itang* adepts to understand.

This imparting of different degrees of information to different groups creates a series of multiple audiences for any performance dramatizing or alluding to that information, just as language itself sets up barriers between native speakers of the particular language a chant or song is in and speakers of other languages. In general, knowledge and the rights to knowledge in Micronesia are very localized, tied to specific places and the people living there. Residents of a particular place know stories involving its geographic features that have been handed down through the generations that have lived there. But they do not necessarily expect people in other communities to know them; and indeed, items of knowl-

edge like former names for plots of land and their meanings are purposefully kept secret from outsiders.

Petersen, in his contribution to this volume, has asserted for Pohnpei, as I am asserting more generally for communities throughout the Federated States of Micronesia, that dance can communicate several messages to several different audiences simultaneously. The exploration of the connections between unshared knowledge, the esoteric or allusive language of many dance chants, and the maintenance of boundaries between communities helps us to understand the practices that create and maintain this kind of polysemy. Esoteric language, together with the minimal explanations that are given of performances, serves as an index of the presence within the presenting community of a body of traditional knowledge that legitimizes that community and engenders respect for it in others' eyes. The power of this kind of index in dance genres historically rooted in the presenting community is seen by contrast with its absence in the airport art-style performances.

From the perspective of Micronesian epistemology, explaining too much would undermine rather than strengthen a community's respect and prestige by destroying the power of hidden knowledge and weakening community boundaries. Realizing this has helped me to understand my initial puzzlement with presentations of performances such as the 1989 FSM Independence Day celebrations: my first reaction was, if they are engaged in nation building, why don't they explain the dances more, thus integrating local communities into a national whole by interpreting them to each other? The reason is that, by and large, these communities do not want that kind of integration. Local communities want to retain a large degree of autonomy, while showing by their participation in national or state events that they do see advantages in belonging to a more encompassing "imagined" political community. Why, after all, should the Micronesians accept our notion of a unitary nation-state, dissolving local communities within a pan-Micronesian melting pot? Does cultural difference preclude cooperation within a bureaucratic framework? Many Micronesians apparently do not think so. None of the island communities desires to give up its sense of its own identity and become only "Micronesian." No one is dancing a pan-Micronesian dance: although theoretically one could be constructed from the marching dances or the stick dances, everyone doing such a dance does it as a dance from a particular place.

Turning from the nationally framed performances to performances in the context of particular islands and municipalities, we observe that

each political community is articulating, through the performances and the speeches that frame them, its own view of the relations between the sub- or micro-communities within it. The performances for the Japanese consul on Yap show the primacy of the three traditionally highest-status municipalities on Yap—Rull, Tamil, and Gagil—and dance groups from these three were chosen to represent the whole of Yap, as that triumvirate represents the whole of Yap in the Yapese traditional political system (Lingenfelter 1975). The Kolonia Town municipal performances show the community as one of immigrants, people from many places who have agreed to use their own special talents in the cooperative construction of a local government. The performances for Sokehs show another multiethnic community, but one in which its original Pohnpeian settlers claim a special status and a stronger role in legitimizing the municipality; we see tension here between Sokehs as a modern, electorally based municipality and Sokehs as a traditional Pohnpeian *wehi*. The Sapwuahfik and Mwoakilloa performances present communities made up of sections that share a common history.

Westerners are used to thinking of voting, not performance, as constitutive of political community. These performances, however, are able to articulate levels of community that are much more complex than “one person, one vote.” They do this by making statements with multiple meanings, which produce and are a product of multiple audiences, which in turn constitute and are constitutive of multiple levels of community.

These dance performances, taken in context of their presentation, are performative in the Austinian sense: they create legitimacy for political relationships among communities. The presence of an outside audience of invited political dignitaries at a performance presented by a municipality or local community confirms and recognizes the constitution of that community as a polity. The dance performance can convey specific messages, for those who can read them, about the constitution and history of that polity. Conversely, the participation of a local-community performing group in a performance sponsored by an encompassing political community instantiates the participation and inclusion of the local community in the larger community—and the terms of the performance, including the hidden messages or withheld meanings, constitute the terms of the relationship between localized and encompassing community.

The performative power—political and aesthetic—of these performances is strengthened by the dancers’ use of their own bodies, anointed with gleaming coconut oil, to embody their communities. Dis-

playing their skill before a rapt audience, they proudly present themselves to members of all the levels of community, from local to national and international, of which they are a part.

NOTES

1. Data for this article were collected in 1985–1987 and 1990. In 1990, through the help of the FSM Public Information Office staff, I was able to obtain videotapes for review of some performances I saw in 1985–1987, as well as a videotape of the 1989 Independence Day Celebration. My comments on the 1989 performances derive from conversations held in 1990 and from this videotape; I was not on Pohnpei at that time. I would like to thank Glenn Petersen for making my return to Pohnpei in 1990 possible, through funding from City University of New York; the 1985–1987 fieldwork was funded by the U.S. Department of Education Fulbright program. I would also like to acknowledge the help of Willy Gorongfel; dance masters Joseph Aldiss of Lewehtik, and Goofalan and Rualath of Maap; and of the many other people in the Federated States of Micronesia who gave me the opportunity to observe dance, answered my questions, or let me dance with them. For discussions contributing to this paper, I am indebted to Karen Nero and the participants in the ASAO sessions on “The Arts and Politics in Oceania,” and to Daniel Wolk and Michael Lieber.

2. There are eleven municipalities within Pohnpei State: the five traditional districts of Pohnpei Island (Madolenihmw, Kitti, Sokehs, U, and Net) plus Kolonia Town, also on Pohnpei, plus the five outlying atolls of Sapwuahfik, Nukuoro, Kapingamarangi, Mwoakilloa (Mokil), and Pingelap. After the 1983 Pohnpei State Constitutional Convention, all the Pohnpei State municipalities held municipal constitutional conventions. I observed several of these, and spoke to delegates from others, during 1985–1987 in Pohnpei State. The drafters of these municipal constitutions inserted supremacy clauses stating that the municipal constitution is the supreme law of the municipality, ignoring the FSM and Pohnpei State constitutions and state and federal laws. Several delegates said, and many indicated through their convention discussions, that they wrote these constitutions so that they could stand on their own, as constitutions of independent polities, if the FSM and Pohnpei State governments disappeared.

3. I use the term “ethnic Pohnpeian” here to distinguish people who regard themselves and their families as being from Pohnpei Island as opposed to the “outer islands,” that is, the atolls of Pohnpei State. I use the term to make contrasts for which the Pohnpeians usually use the term *pwelidak*; however, in the context of the Pohnpei State Constitution, *pwelidak* means “citizen of Pohnpei State” and includes outer islanders.

4. The performers were not Palauan but apparently chose the dance because they liked it. They probably were unaware of its popularity—I don’t think it was intentional that three groups chose the same dance. The FSM staffer who edited the videotape for the FSM Public Information Office archives cut the third presentation of the dance from the tape.

5. Japan received Micronesia as a League of Nations mandate at the end of World War I. The Japanese colonial administration lasted until the U.S. occupation of the islands in World War II. In 1947 the United Nations designated Micronesia a “strategic” Trust Terri-

tory with the United States as administrator. The U.S. and FSM governments terminated the trusteeship agreement with respect to the Federated States in 1986, with U.N. Trusteeship Council approval.

6. Petersen said that when he saw this dance performed in U—and it was the same community that presented it—it was performed using the more traditional genres of sitting and standing dance, but the people in Lewehtik told me it was composed as a *lehp*. The man who directed the dance, and set its current version, lives in Lewehtik and holds a high Sokehs title. He was born in Palau in 1916, the child of Pohnpeiens exiled after the Sokehs Rebellion, and his family returned to Pohnpei when he was thirteen. He said that he learned the song that the dance is set to from his mother, and that it was composed in the early 1920s.

7. The FSM Congress has one house—the Senate—but two types of senators: four-year-term senators who are elected at large from each state, and two-year-term senators who are elected from congressional districts within each state. Only the four-year-term senators can be elected to the presidency or vice-presidency by their colleagues.

8. The U.N. Security Council did vote to approve the termination of the trusteeship for the Federated States in December 1990. The United States brought it to the agenda when the prospect of a Soviet veto was no longer a problem.

PULAPESE DANCE: ASSERTING IDENTITY AND TRADITION IN MODERN CONTEXTS

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Dance is a form of communication, an avenue for expressing collective ideas and values (Blacking 1985; Hanna [1979] 1987). Dance can symbolize social relations, gender identity, and core values (Hanna 1988; Kaeppler 1978b, 1985); thus, depending on context, this communication can have political significance. For the people of Pulap, in the outer islands of Micronesia, dance communicates focal themes of identity. Dance performances for interisland audiences assert traditionalism as a symbol of strength and worthiness in the modern world of economic, political, and social upheaval.

Pulap Atoll is part of the State of Chuuk (formerly known as Truk) in the Federated States of Micronesia,¹ a nation now in free association with the United States. Chuuk has been undergoing rapid change: economies are shifting from subsistence to wage labor, young people are pursuing ever-higher levels of formal education, stores are filling with imported goods, power is moving into the hands of an educated elite, and inequalities are growing. But Pulapese have trailed behind other Chuukese. Missionaries reached them far later than they reached other areas of Chuuk. Pulap parents reluctantly sent their children off island for high school a few years later than others did. Their search for new jobs thus also lagged.

Numbering about four hundred, Pulapese are among the least acculturated islanders in the state, and life on the atoll superficially appears little changed. Women wearing lavalavas regularly work their taro gardens, and men still make canoes for fishing and sailing. Women bend low in the presence of their brothers, and matriliney continues to structure relations.

Nonetheless, life is changing. Many Pulapese are migrating to the port town on Weno (formerly known as Moen), the main island and capital of Chuuk, though usually they view themselves as only temporary residents in town. Pulapese have formed a migrant community on Weno and consciously keep not only a Pulapese identity but also a way of life they identify as Pulapese. Rather than accept appearing backward and undeserving of an active role in today's Micronesia, Pulapese assert a cultural identity based on being traditional; they contend that they have retained customs that others in Chuuk have abandoned but that nonetheless still represent common core values (Flinn 1990). These efforts are increasingly self-conscious, and some customs asserted as traditional are in fact relatively recent (or have recent elements, such as imported fabric for loincloths), but they symbolize a contrast with other islanders in Chuuk. Pulapese have no wish to be museum specimens, frozen in some timeless past. They see themselves as part of modern Micronesia, certainly as participants in the economic and political changes; and the context in which those changes are taking place includes a "politization of traditional culture" (Nason 1984:446). Especially with the move to internal self-government, material culture and traditional customs in Micronesia have gained attention and value. Thus Pulapese are proud to assert as evidence of their worthiness any practices that symbolize this cultural heritage.

One avenue of assertion is dance. At times the Pulapese perform only for themselves, but on Weno they often have a far wider audience, potentially all of Chuuk State. The dance performances on Weno thus contain political overtones. Although performances today differ from those in the past, Pulapese nonetheless manage to present them as traditional. Tradition is construed and asserted in the present for current purposes, often in the pursuit of prestige, recognition, or power. Encoded in Pulapese dance are messages about the kind of people the Pulapese are and the sources of their strength, with the implication that they deserve respect and a position in contemporary Micronesia. These are people pursuing many of the new opportunities for schooling, jobs, material goods, and political offices but at the same time practicing customs they assert as evidence of traditionalism.

Dance in the Pre-Christian Context

When Pulapese dance today, they draw upon beliefs about an old and valued corpus of dances. Islanders performed daily before missionary activities discouraged dancing in the early years of the American

administration in the late 1940s. As Pulapese put it, “In the old days, we danced with the seasons.” During breadfruit season, men performed vigorous, energetic dances; during the off-season, a more sedate style prevailed, with both men and women dancing.

These dances had their own political nuances. Dances during the off-season served in part to control the harvesting of coconuts, taro, and other staple foods. This season is known as *le yefeng*, “starvation time.” Breadfruit was in the past and is still available only seasonally, during the summer, though the islanders preserve some of it for use in the off-season. The style of dance used for controlling the use of off-season staples is a seated style called *yawanú*, “stop coconuts.” Although the label refers only to coconuts, Pulapese understand it as applying to staple foods in general. The idea was to keep people from picking coconuts and taro, except in set areas at appointed times, and to ensure that they subsisted instead on greens and other foods planted near the houses. During this period they danced both in the early afternoon and in the evening. Pulapese say the chief and the council watched the people to be sure they kept away from the forbidden areas.

During these off-season dances, women danced first, followed by the men. Both groups sat in rows, with children in front, older people toward the back. Many dances were accompanied by love songs, and Pulapese added to their repertoire several songs collected from elsewhere in Chuuk.

The style of dance associated with the breadfruit season is known as *wúú maaw*, “stand strong.” Dancers would begin performing these dances about a month before the onset of the breadfruit season. Part of their purpose was to develop men’s physical strength in preparation for the work of the coming season. Women sat as an audience, though they participated in the singing that accompanied the movements. The dance was like a drill, performed in circles, with the youngest in the inner circles. The men started with seated dances—perhaps ten or twenty—and then they stood and danced with more lively, energetic movements and vigorous jumping. The dancing was both an exhibition of strength and a way of exercising to gain the fortitude necessary for climbing trees and for fishing—trapping, netting, and deep diving. Then, when preserved breadfruit ran out, the Pulapese returned to the more sedate dancing of *yawanú*.

Pulapese take pride in their knowledge of the composers of these dances. Names of composers, those who created dance, tune, and words, are handed down along with a dance. For some dances, composers created a whole set of accompanying songs on a theme and titled the

entire set. One popular set is *patú*, referring to a type of mackerel important to Pulapese. Today, they may dance a selected piece of the larger work rather than the entire set.

Despite schooling and conversion to Christianity, Pulapese have faith in the historical accuracy of the stories behind these dances, even when they concern magic or sorcery. These stories contribute to pride about their strength. For example, one cycle that has to do with *patú* tells of a woman who was a skilled magician, a woman who could call the school of fish to the island with chants. In her honor, dances were created. But these songs also tell of how the woman became angry one day, after visiting cookhouses where other women were working, preparing her fish. As they wrapped the fish in leaves to place in the ovens, they were complaining, "We still have fish; why is she still calling fish every day?" Indignant, the woman then vowed to stop the fish for ten generations. For a long period of time, then, no one saw the fish. They could only dance and sing of the *patú* that had deserted them. Then, late in the 1940s, the fish supposedly came back, signaling the end of the ten generations. Pulapese believe they can date the composition and the original event by going back ten generations.

Another example of continuing belief in magic powers concerns a dance composed during World War II about the death at sea of a Pulapese man. During the war, Pulapese caught in Chuuk Lagoon were evacuated to the island of Udot. A Pulap man became drunk and sailed off in a canoe and was lost. Communication between Pulapese in Chuuk Lagoon and on the atoll was cut off at the time, yet on Pulap a *waytawa*, someone who could be possessed by a spirit, learned of the disaster from a spirit and composed a dance about the event. Pulapese then performed it. Those present included the lost man's mother, herself a *waytawa*, as well as spirits who joined them in the meetinghouse to watch. The mother had not yet learned, however, about the death of her son. During the dance, the spirit of her son arrived. Other *waytawa* could see him, but the spirits managed to hide enough of her son's spirit body so that the mother only saw below the knees. Yet that was enough—the mother recognized her son. These stories come to mind when Pulapese dance, and though proud of their conversion to Catholicism and their modern rejection of sorcery, they express pride in past exploits that provide evidence of strength—including supernatural strength.

In addition to the daily dances, Pulapese also danced for special occasions. One type of dance celebrated a large fish catch from a school swimming past the island. Informants say women danced in the same general style as for a seasonal dance, but some might exaggerate their

movements, adding more licentious words and motions, even in the presence of brothers for whom they normally had to show more decorum. Dedicating a canoe house was another occasion for dancing. When men worked putting up poles, frames, posts, and beams, women danced *yapelirá*, “making the wood lighter.” Singing to the wood supposedly lightened the load. Then while the men put a roof on, the women again came, making the thatch panels for the roof while singing and dancing. Inauguration of a new chief, initiation of navigators, and interisland gatherings provided other occasions for dancing.

Missionary disapproval called a halt to the dancing in the late 1940s. Along with many other customs, dancing was labeled pagan. Eventually, however, the Pulapese lobbied for distinctions between pagan activities and traditional customs. Traditional customs came to include many of the dances, except explicitly sexual ones. Pulapese today dance only for public feasts and celebrations, not daily. Their practice nonetheless shows some continuity with the past, when they also danced for special events. But instead of celebrating initiations of navigators, today’s contexts include religious holidays, church dedications, and visits from important dignitaries. What originally was pagan now frequently celebrates Christian events. Despite these changes, however, Pulapese dance performances resonate with themes from their past. When Pulapese perform today, their dances signify their heritage, which includes both their past strengths as well as their current worthiness. This current worthiness in their minds is based on retention of valued ways.

Pulapese Dance in the Modern Context

In a deliberate move to resurrect old customs—or rather, old ways as they are perceived today—the Pulapese have discussed resuming daily dancing. Although Pulapese value old customs, at the same time they clearly want to fit them into the modern context, complete with its constraints and opportunities. In particular, some Pulapese have voiced concerns about *yawanú*—“stop coconuts”—because they are reluctant now to allow clan leaders to control their harvest. Their concerns may be due in part to their having become acquainted with Western notions of authoritarian leadership and their making the assumption that their clan leaders followed—and would in the future follow—such a model of leadership. In addition, they have less need today to regulate food production and consumption because of outside aid from the United States and the availability of imported food. Furthermore, even those

most in favor of daily *yawanú* want to avoid any dances the church would disapprove of.

Some Pulapese suggest resurrecting only the *wúú maaw*, "stand strong." They contend this would be traditional, even though these dances comprise only a portion of the old works and represent only one season. Furthermore, the Pulapese want to see the dances integrated into the modern context that involves both schooling and church activities. A major question is the seemingly simple one of what time during the day to dance, because of potential conflicts with morning church services, afternoon rosary, and school classes. No one suggests abandoning any of these modern activities to make time for dance, despite the Pulapese contention that they should keep their old customs. Instead, they interpret the way they dance today to be traditional.

The dances are public performances that take place at a variety of public occasions. Participation is broadly based; all Pulapese are welcome, even encouraged, to join dance practices and performances. But there is also a distinct audience focus, whether that audience be other Pulapese, when dancing takes place on the home atoll, or other Chuukese, when dancing is part of other island festivities. On Weno, Pulapese participate in contexts that often involve the entire state. Two occasions I observed were the inauguration of the governor in July 1986 and the dedication of a church in July 1989.

Today Pulapese are known in Chuuk for their dancing. Frequently public officials, church leaders, or private individuals on Weno ask them to perform during public festivities; Pulapese, more than any other islanders, including their neighbors, with whom they share many customs, are specifically asked to perform. These are occasions, then, for public assertions of Pulapese identity through dance.

First, the Pulapese contend that their dances—unlike those performed by other Chuukese—are traditional, following their old customs. Dance leaders select many of the old seasonal dances, with traditional movements, words, and melodies. In contrast, dances other islanders perform are much more recent and often adopted from other groups. In the face of outside pressures, the Pulapese contend, other Chuukese abandoned their old ways, but they have successfully resisted some of these changes. There is an implicit message concerning their strength, the strength to maintain their old ways as well as the strength implied in the stories of battle, navigation, fishing, and sorcery (see also Petersen, this volume).

Despite these claims regarding tradition, however, some of the dances Pulapese perform were originally acquired from other Chuukese, who

later ceased to perform them. Thus, rather than taking traditional custom to mean behavior passed down intact, unchanged through generations, Pulapese assert as traditional custom what other islanders do not do or no longer do. Furthermore, not all the dances are old. Many are recent compositions, complete with Western-style melodies.

These very departures signal other aspects of Pulapese assertions about their continuing to practice valued customs. The islanders contend they enriched their song and dance repertoire by borrowing from others—without abandoning any of their own songs. Today, when they dance these borrowed compositions, they say that other Chuukese watch and realize, presumably with envy, that they used to perform those songs and dances themselves. Furthermore, the contexts of adopting these other forms further enhance their Pulapese identity. They are proud of being good sailors and navigators, and they adopted songs and dances from contact with these other islanders. Several other dances they acquired when men worked at forced labor with Germans or Japanese; those who returned came back with reputations of strength and tales of adventure. The image of strength is critical for Pulapese, so the songs resonate with allusions to strength. What is traditionally Pulapese today is not so much what was Pulapese in the past as it is what others no longer do.

Furthermore, Pulapese on occasion dance *maas* (march), a style recently adopted from others and still shared with them. And many songs have English, German, or Japanese words. But again, Pulapese see no contradiction: they enriched their repertoire, supposedly without losing their other dances, and they contend they are more skilled than others even in the dances they share. When they dance for other Chuukese, however, they tend to rely more on dances they believe others no longer perform.

Pulapese also perform other types of new dances, again in seeming contradiction to their claims of traditionalism. All of the new ones at the church dedication in July 1989 were performed by women. Most of the new dances had accompanying songs that honored the bishop, a native Micronesian. A few dances celebrated other important islanders as well. Though ostensibly new, composed for the occasion or revised from older forms, the dances and songs can nonetheless be construed and presented as traditional: they are of the type that women traditionally compose—those that honor children and relatives and express strong emotion and nurturance for those they honor. They thus retain traditional gender roles and imagery: men sing of heroic past events, women of their close emotional attachments.

The male and female dances illustrate Pulap cultural notions about other behaviors appropriate to the genders. Men dance together with other men—as they tend to work and socialize with other men. Women dance with other women, as they, too, work and socialize primarily with their female kin. The dances reflect gender ideology, as women dance roles in which they are caring and nurturing, especially of their kin, and men's dances reflect strength, bravery, and male interests such as fishing and navigation. Concern for kin rather than individualism, nurturing and caring for others rather than pursuing personal renown, and emphasis on traditional subsistence and navigation rather than dependence on money and machines are aspects of Pulapese traditionalism that they present with pride. Pulapese contend that others in Chuuk have become selfish and individualistic, and seduced by money.

Pulapese deride other islanders, especially more-acculturated Chuukese, for lacking both unity and generosity—others have come to rely on money and have supposedly lost their self-sufficiency and willingness to share with kin. Pulapese place a high value on cooperation and unity, as often expressed in reciprocity among kin, community feasts, and patterns of redistribution with regard to a fishing catch or island feast. Furthermore, humility, modesty, and self-effacement, especially for women, and an emphasis on group concerns rather than individual ones are highly valued behavioral traits. These are reflected and reinforced in the dance. Performers dance as a group, with all of them dancing and singing together. A single dancer—recognized as knowledgeable in the dance—may begin the accompanying song, but the voice does not continue to stand out or dominate the others.

On Weno, Pulapese practice their dances in a new meetinghouse built on land purchased by some Pulapese leaders that supports the core of their migrant community. The meetinghouse symbolizes their unity on Weno. The Pulapese rehearse their dances and songs in a common, open area, with others, natives of Weno or other islands, scattered around to watch.

When practice begins for some public performance, all able-bodied Pulapese are encouraged to participate—another sign of unity. Yet the encouragement is noncoercive, nonauthoritarian. Leaders exhort all to participate but respect decisions not to. Reasons given for not participating include physical problems or inadequate time for practicing; they even respect vague words of reluctance.

Typically, men or women march in with a dance and song and then sit in rows and dance seated for the first portion of the performance. During this part, a few may stand in the middle of a dance not as solo

performers, but singing and moving with the others. Usually the more skilled dancers choose to rise this way briefly; however, their performance enhances the group image, rather than showcasing the individual's special talents.

The costumes convey similar themes. Dancers all wear similar clothing and decorations, with no one dancer trying to outshine the others with special finery. Pulapese proudly assert that their dress is traditional, again constructing a tradition in the present. Men wear loincloths and women wear wraparound lavalavas—the symbol of traditional dress in contrast with Western dress. Pulapese are among the few Chuukese who still wear this style, but typically the loincloth and lavalava are lengths of imported cloth purchased from stores in town. Red is the most popular color—a traditional favorite. Some women still weave loincloths and lavalavas on backstrap looms, a skill Pulapese are proud of, but even then they usually use imported crochet cotton. On the rare occasions when they use hibiscus fiber—for an anthropologist or a tourist—ditto masters provide a popular dye!

The leader of the women (who is also of the chiefly clan, which gives her additional influence) encourages the women to dance topless—the traditional Pulapese way. But, again following custom, she will not force anyone to do so who would feel uncomfortable. Pulapese women on Weno are increasingly reluctant to appear topless; they risk being embarrassed rather than proud. So traditional dancing on Weno may be done wearing a halter.

Flowers, beads, and coconut-frond ornaments complete the costumes. But the beads and sometimes even the flowers are store-bought imports. The message, however, remains one of tradition, attachment to old Pulap ways of life, and a continuing connection with the land of Pulap, even in the port town.

From Dance to Politics

The songs and dances taken from elsewhere in Chuuk also clearly connect the Pulapese with other Chuukese. Pulapese want to be part of the larger political and economic scene, not isolated from it. These dances send the message that they have always been connected with other places, never isolated, and continue to be vital participants in inter-island activities. Thus they assert rights to new educational opportunities, jobs, material goods, and political offices. Dance is one mechanism for communicating this message to others as Pulapese strive to survive and succeed in modern Micronesia. The assertions of traditionalism and

the valuing of old customs must be understood to be oriented toward contemporary goals as well, with tradition defined relative to competing patterns, not as behavior passed down unchanged from earlier generations.

Contemporary goals of Pulapese include a Western-style education. Youth in Chuuk are encouraged to obtain at least a high school diploma. A number of young people now continue beyond high school for some college education. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, most Pulapese sought degrees from U.S. mainland colleges, but now Pulapese are more likely to choose Guam or schools within Micronesia itself. Related to the desire for schooling, Pulapese want jobs that will bring a cash income. Consequently, the community of Pulapese working, attending school, or looking for jobs on Weno is growing. Pulapese are beginning to acquire more consumer goods: TVs, VCRs, refrigerators, fans, air conditioners, and even some furniture. Even at home on the atoll, where the economy is still based essentially on subsistence horticulture and fishing, interest in cash is escalating. Many are building homes from imported materials, fishing is being developed as a cash product, and recently Pulapese even purchased a boat to ferry passengers and cargo in and out of Weno. Pulapese take an active interest in state political affairs out of a concern for their island's interests. They either run their own candidates or exert personal influence on those from neighboring islands to represent their own interests.

All these changes threaten a valued way of life, especially apparent as Pulapese see their impact on other, far more acculturated islanders. As all of Micronesia grapples with its future, islanders seek to define what is Micronesian—traditional yet suitable for the modern context. Pulapese see themselves as living representatives of much of the tradition others have lost and thus critical to the efforts of the state and even the larger Micronesian entity.

NOTE

1. According to the Chuuk State Legislature, the official spelling of "Pulap" is now "Polap." Micronesians are in the process of transliterating place names to reflect indigenous pronunciations rather than foreign misperceptions.

“IT’S THE SAME OLD SONG BUT WITH A DIFFERENT MEANING”: COMMUNITY AND ETHNICITY IN SIKAIANA EXPRESSIVE CULTURE

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When I first arrived on Sikaiana in 1980, I had no intention of studying the local songs or dances. I had no training in ethnomusicology. I cannot play an instrument; I cannot carry a tune; and if at all possible, except under extreme duress or intoxication, I avoid dancing. But I found that songs and dances are important media through which the Sikaiana express themselves. Moreover, songs and dances reflect major processes in present-day Sikaiana social life including the replacement of traditional institutions by Western ones and the changes in these Western institutions as they are incorporated into Sikaiana’s daily life.¹

This article is not only about singing and dancing; it is also about social and political organization. Dancing and singing are one of the fundamental ways in which the Sikaiana maintain themselves as a separate community in the Solomon Islands and display their ethnicity to other Solomon Islanders in the multiethnic nation into which they have become incorporated.² The Sikaiana perform different dances and songs depending upon their audience. They present and define themselves differently in song and dance to other Sikaiana within their community than they do to other, non-Sikaiana ethnic groups. I label the occasions when the Sikaiana are singing and dancing for themselves “community events”; the occasions when they are performing for outsiders are “ethnic displays,” although sometimes sociologists and anthropologists use the term “ethnicity” to refer to both kinds of activities. Of course, both kinds of activities are interrelated. In rehearsals for dance festivals in Honiara (the capital of the Solomon Islands to which many Sikaiana have emigrated), Sikaiana migrants interact with one another

while practicing a performance for others. Moreover, these performances for others also reinforce the Sikaiana image of themselves as a separate community in a multicultural society (see also the articles by Petersen, Flinn, and Pinsker in this volume).

I will describe several kinds of performances that illustrate the manner in which singing and dancing are transformed and recontextualized to express contemporary Sikaiana concerns and identities, both to themselves and to others. In this process, the Sikaiana are not the conservative bearers of old traditions nor the passive recipients of Western ones. In maintaining their community and in presenting their ethnicity to others, the Sikaiana pick and choose activities from a variety of sources both within their own culture and from other cultures. Dances and songs are redefined and reintegrated into new contexts to express contemporary concerns and define present-day identities.³

Songs and dances are transformed and recontextualized in a variety of ways. For example, although the Sikaiana refer to many of the dances that they perform at art festivals and special occasions for other ethnic groups as their traditional culture or "*kastam*" (*kastom*), many of these "*kastom*" dances were learned from other Polynesian peoples earlier in this century. Borrowed songs and dances can be fully incorporated into the community to express communal values. Guitar songs, for example, are derived from an outside tradition but have been incorporated into Sikaiana life in a manner that reinforces a sense of community: they are performed mainly for the Sikaiana themselves. Similarly, traditional songs and dances can be used to express new identities in new contexts. When the prime minister of the Solomon Islands visited Sikaiana in 1982, traditional ritual was performed for him precisely as an example of Sikaiana traditions. Finally, the formation of a sports association in Honiara has contributed to an internal sense of community among Sikaiana migrants and serves to organize presentations of Sikaiana ethnicity to outsiders.

In developing their song and dance genres, the Sikaiana are cultural arbitrators combining traditional and outside genres and then recontextualizing them into an indigenous medium. In presenting their *kastom* songs and dances for others, they are curators, deciding what to preserve and how to display it.⁴

Historical Context

Sikaiana, a Polynesian outlier in the Solomon Islands, has undergone intensive social and cultural changes as a result of Western contact. The

people are Polynesian with close affinities and contacts with Tuvalu (Ellice Islands) and other central Polynesian outliers including Nukumanu, Ontong Java, and the outer islands of Temotu Province (Santa Cruz Islands).

As early as the middle of the nineteenth century, Sikaiana had contacts with whalers, and in the late nineteenth century contacts with traders became important for the local economy. By 1900, trade goods, such as steel tools, pots and pans, flint lighters, tobacco, and trade cloth were necessities. In the late 1800s, Sikaiana was incorporated into the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, although the government's contacts remained sporadic until the mid-twentieth century. In 1929, the Melanesian Mission (Anglican) sent missionaries to the atoll, and there was a rapid and almost complete conversion to Christianity during the following decade. Following World War II, the protectorate government established a court, a local government, a medical clinic, a cooperative store, and a school. Sikaiana people migrated from the atoll not only to attend schools but also to work for wages in various professions and occupations.

Although the population on the atoll has remained at about two hundred or two hundred fifty people since 1900, the total Sikaiana population has almost tripled. Almost two-thirds of the total population has migrated to other areas in the Solomon Islands, notably Honiara, the capital. There they live among people from many other cultural and language groups.⁵ Sikaiana migrants have become permanent residents in Honiara, and since World War II, Sikaiana children have been raised away from the atoll. Nevertheless, most migrants and their children maintain ties and loyalties to their home atoll. They visit the atoll, participate in Sikaiana activities, and encourage their children to marry other Sikaiana.

Both on the atoll and in Honiara, Western institutions are an integral part of Sikaiana lives. Christianity, formal education, political councils, and courts—unknown to the Sikaiana before 1930—are very much a part of their present-day social life. People attend church regularly and raise money for religious activities. To be called a Christian (*tama o te misoni*) is to have one's character praised. Parents send their children to school and encourage them to do well. Most people have worked for wages at least part of their lives, and some during their entire adult lives. Local elections are important events, sometimes contested with bitterness. If a dispute cannot be resolved in any other way, it is taken to court. Cases concerning libel, family disagreements, trespassing, public fighting, and land tenure were heard in the local court in the 1980s.

Most Sikaiana speak Pijin (Solomon Islands Pidgin), the lingua franca of the Solomon Islands, and some speak English. They read books, listen to the radio, and watch videos: one little boy is sometimes called Rambo, in honor of one of Sikaiana's present-day culture heroes. A thorough and accurate study of present-day Sikaiana culture must include an analysis of all these institutions and practices. Although Sikaiana life was changed by the incorporation of foreign institutions, the Sikaiana also modified these institutions to serve their local needs, interests, and culture.

An Overview of Sikaiana Dances and Songs

In the past, singing and dancing were always important activities in Sikaiana life. They accompanied ritual and ceremonial events and were also performed for recreation. Today, people sing hymns in church, perform dances at weddings, and continue to dance for recreation in the evenings and at parties.

When I first arrived on the atoll in late 1980, many Sikaiana were concerned about the loss of their *kastom*. *Kastom*—the Pijin word derived from English “custom” that refers to Sikaiana traditional culture—not only includes traditional ritual practices, which most Sikaiana are happy to have seen replaced by Christian rites, but also refers to traditional dances and songs. Younger people were interested in guitar music and Western-style intersexual, face-to-face dancing, which the Sikaiana call “*hula*.”⁶ Older people complained that younger people had not learned traditional dances because of their interest in these modern styles. Parents also complained that the close dancing of the *hula* resulted in premarital affairs, which are considered immoral. In 1980, as part of the preparations for holiday celebrations (which include a week at the end of November devoted to the atoll's patron saint, St. Andrew, and then two consecutive weeks during Christmas and the New Year), there were rehearsals in which older people taught traditional dances to younger people. Younger people participated in these rehearsals, although young bachelors were clearly more enthusiastic about *hula* dancing and the opportunities for romance it offered them.

Feasts are held during these holidays, often followed by dancing. During the 1980 holidays, the dancing started with older people performing traditional dances. But younger men took advantage of any lulls in the traditional dancing to move in with guitars. The older people later complained that they had been pressured to stop their tradi-

tional dancing and were pushed aside by younger people and their guitars. Eventually, after the love affairs of a large number of young people became public, these *hula* dances were curtailed by the atoll's church committee. By late 1981, *hula* dances were held only when allowed by the local church committee as part of a special feast or party.⁷

During my stay in 1980–1983, there seemed to be waning enthusiasm for the traditional dance genres. Young women still rehearsed and performed the “traditional” dances when an important dignitary arrived at the atoll. For instance, in 1980 when the bishop of Mala'ita visited Sikaiana, there was dancing. In June 1981, Sikaiana sent a delegation of young women to dance at the consecration of a new bishop. Although mature men went as chaperones, none performed for the new bishop. Many of the dances performed for these dignitaries were learned from other Pacific Islanders in the early part of this century when the fathers and grandfathers of living Sikaiana worked on government vessels and met people from other Pacific Islands. The words of the songs are Polynesian but have no precise meaning in the Sikaiana language. A Sikaiana man explained the interest in these dances by saying that they look better than Sikaiana's own indigenous dances.⁸ During my stay from 1980 to 1983, a Kiribati woman married to a Sikaiana man taught the young women many Kiribati dances, which also were performed on special occasions.

Late in 1981, people decided to perform a *puina*, a traditional song festival in which men and women broke into separate groups and composed songs critical of one another. These song festivals had been discouraged by the early missionaries and church leaders, who found parts of these performances too lascivious and felt some of the lyrics were counterproductive to the harmonious atmosphere they wished to encourage in a Christian community. These song festivals were performed less frequently after World War II: there was one performance in 1969 to commemorate the American landing on the moon, at least one other in the 1970s, this one in 1981, and none between 1981 and 1987.

Guitar songs became a topic of the songs composed for the 1981 *puina* festival. To tease the young women, some of the older men composed a song bragging that today's young women could easily be seduced by any young man who knew how to play the guitar. Although directed at the young women who had been involved in love affairs, the song also was a backhanded swipe at the younger men whose interest in guitar music and drinking was considered frivolous by their elders.

One more musical tradition that is important in present-day Sikaiana life is commercial music from Western countries, especially popular and

rock music. Most Sikaiana families have a cassette player and radio. Much of the programming on the national radio station of the Solomon Islands is Western pop and rock music.

In the period from 1980 to 1983, despite the disdain of some adults, guitar songs were, in my view, the most vibrant expressive activity practiced by the Sikaiana. Young people composed new songs to commemorate specific events, lament lost love, describe family quarrels, and ridicule one another for violating Sikaiana norms and expectations. Despite lack of enthusiasm for it from older people, the guitar music reflected the values and experiences of everyone. On leaving the Solomon Islands in 1983, I thought that the Sikaiana were losing interest and competence in traditional songs and dances. The 1981 *puina* was a rare occasion for composition in traditional style, but many men had difficulty in agreeing on the proper verse structure and tune. I suspected that guitar music would eventually supplant most traditional dances and songs and that guitar music might in turn be supplanted by the commercial music played on cassettes and the radio (see Donner 1987).

When I returned in 1987, I was surprised to learn that Sikaiana people living in Honiara, both young and old, both men and women, were meeting regularly to practice *kastom* dancing, including dances learned from other Pacific Islanders earlier in the century. These dance rehearsals did not include the entire Sikaiana population residing in Honiara, but there were about thirty or forty regular participants, which is a substantial portion of the population there. Moreover, people were practicing these dances without any specific public event in mind; they simply wanted to learn the dances.

The Recontextualization of Community Ritual into Ethnic Display

In 1982, the prime minister of the Solomon Islands visited Sikaiana. His visit reflected his interest in showing concern for the remote areas of the nation and a national policy that emphasized decentralization and local autonomy in decision making. The Sikaiana decided to greet him by reenacting some of their traditional rituals. During the British Protectorate period, the Sikaiana greeted visits by the resident commissioner in a similar manner.

At the prime minister's visit, the Sikaiana combined parts of quite separate rituals: they presented certain ritual songs and activities from the *teika llee*, and they performed the *kaitae hakatele*, a chant that traditionally was performed during the *manea* ceremonies. In addition, several other traditional dances were rehearsed and performed. Before

Christianity, the *teika llee* was performed when a large fish, turtle, whale, or other unusual animal washed ashore on Sikaiana's reef. One old woman who had witnessed the traditional ritual explained to me that the ceremony was performed to supplicate a spirit of the ocean and to prevent any harmful diseases or calamities the animal might bring. The *manea* took place when the roofing material of the main spirit house, *hale aitu*, was being replaced. In pre-Christian Sikaiana, both events involved the entire community and were held to ensure spiritual support for the atoll's welfare. By the time of the prime minister's visit, neither event had been performed for more than fifty years except as reenactments for visiting dignitaries.

The Sikaiana spent several months rehearsing these performances, usually on several weekday evenings and on Sunday afternoons. Most of the adults resident on the atoll participated, although, as usual in many community activities, the women were more reliable participants than the men. At first there was disagreement about the proper enactment of these ceremonies and the precise wording of the *kaitae hakatele*. Although the very oldest people had participated in these ceremonies when they were being performed as part of Sikaiana's pre-Christian ritual, the few people who knew anything about the rituals seemed to remember them from their more recent performances for visiting British dignitaries. Eventually, a version was agreed upon (taken from one of the few people whom I had trusted in collecting my own data about traditional Sikaiana culture).

The rehearsals were community events and to some extent reflected local politics. John Kilatu, a respected member of the community and a doctor, took the role of chief (*aliki*). Fane Telena, the oldest woman on the atoll and a member of one of the chiefly descent lines, performed the role of the female assistant (*sapai ulu*) who ceremonially dresses the chief in the *manea*. The choice of Fane was not surprising. She was old enough to have participated in these ceremonies when they were part of the atoll's ritual system. As a female member of one of Sikaiana's chiefly lines, she could claim traditional legitimacy in her role of helping dress and prepare the chief for his ritual duties. Kilatu, however, was not from a chiefly line. His choice as chief seems to be a result of the community's respect for him and Fane's reluctance to legitimate any one of the several men competing to be recognized as successor to the traditional chieftaincy. There is a longstanding controversy between several different lineages concerning legitimate succession to the traditional office of chief.

This performance for the prime minister also reflected broader pro-

cesses in Sikaiana social life. Traditional ritual was transformed into a modern context. Pieces of rituals were decontextualized from their former sacred purposes and redefined to represent present-day Sikaiana ethnicity to outsiders. Ritual events that once united the community in its relationship with the sacred were combined and transformed into a secular event that unites the community in displaying a distinct ethnicity to the leader of their multiethnic nation.

The Incorporation of Western Music into a Community Activity: Guitar Songs

The Sikaiana have always been enthusiastic to learn songs and dances from others. A genre of songs known as *mako o te henua* comprises songs from other lands with words that are recognizably Polynesian but not Sikaiana. During the protectorate period, the Sikaiana learned songs in English. These songs can still be heard on Sikaiana, most often when men are drinking fermented toddy. "Pack up Your Troubles," "You Are My Sunshine," and "There Is a Church in the Valley" are popular English-language songs. The Sikaiana also know current rock and folk music from Britain, the United States, and Australia, in addition to the contemporary music of other Pacific islands, especially Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

In the 1960s, some Sikaiana, while attending schools and living in Honiara, began to play the guitar. They composed songs in the vernacular, but often the tunes were derived from Western songs. Most of the guitar songs comment on specific events in terms of Sikaiana values. The songs often use metaphor, *hulihulisala*, to disguise and enliven meanings. These guitar songs are mainly composed and sung by young unmarried men and women, *lautama*, although most people in the community are familiar with the songs and their themes. Several different generations of *lautama* have matured and married since the 1960s, and the songs composed in the 1960s and 1970s are not necessarily sung at present. When I returned to the Solomon Islands in 1987, I heard new songs that had been composed since I left in 1983 (see Donner 1987).

Guitar songs incorporate borrowed components, including the instrument and most tunes. The guitar songs, moreover, are performed during the *hula* dances between young men and women, an introduced style borrowed from Western dances. Nevertheless, guitar songs are basically an indigenous medium of expression. They concern specific Sikaiana events and people. Western institutions, although ever-present

in Sikaiana life, are rarely a central topic in these songs. As in traditional songs, metaphors are used to convey meanings. Young people compose their lyrics in the vernacular, even though many young male composers feel more comfortable speaking Pijin in casual speech because they have spent so much time abroad. Composing in Pijin would make the songs accessible to a broad audience throughout the Solomon Islands. But unlike Western popular music, Sikaiana guitar songs are not composed for a diverse audience; instead, the songs are composed specifically for the Sikaiana community. In Sikaiana guitar music, a foreign musical tradition is incorporated into Sikaiana life in a manner that emphasizes the values and relationships of the people within the community.

The Preservation of Community and Display of Ethnicity: The Vania Sports Association

The Sikaiana people share a language and a culture but reside in two separate locations: Honiara and Sikaiana. On Sikaiana, the atoll is so small that people of necessity participate in the same political, religious, and ceremonial institutions. Almost everyone attends Sunday church services and the community meetings that often follow. Holidays and other festive occasions, such as marriages, involve the entire population, as do special work projects on the school or church.

Sikaiana emigrants in Honiara visit with one another, congregate on holidays and at weddings to celebrate by drinking, dancing, and singing, and they prefer to marry one another. Many return to the atoll during their yearly vacations. But the Sikaiana community in Honiara is more amorphous than that on the atoll. They do not control their political and social institutions but share them with Honiara's ethnically diverse population. As increasing numbers of Sikaiana marry non-Sikaiana, more and more become distanced from other Sikaiana people. On the atoll, it is possible to come into contact with any and all other members of the community during the course of a day's routine activities. In Honiara, although there are several areas with high concentrations of Sikaiana families, such as Bahai Center and a settlement at Tenaru, many Sikaiana live in separate neighborhoods, where they are comparatively isolated except when they make visits in evenings and on weekends.

When I returned to the Solomon Islands in 1987, I found that in my absence the Sikaiana had developed several institutions and activities that united migrants living in Honiara. There were fund-raising activi-

ties to collect money for various projects affecting the Sikaiana community. The Sikaiana had also formed their own sports association to organize sports competition among themselves, to field teams in the various sports leagues in Honiara, to preserve Sikaiana traditions, and to organize the performance of their dances for others.

By 1987, the Sikaiana were holding frequent community fund-raising events. There were a series of events in the 1980s to raise money to build a new church for the Sikaiana families who lived together at the settlement at Tenaru, a few miles outside of Honiara. Then, in 1986, Sikaiana was hit by a very strong cyclone, Namu. Although no one was killed, most houses were destroyed and the taro and coconuts ruined. When I arrived a year later, the atoll was still dependent upon food supplies sent from Honiara. The Sikaiana living in Honiara had organized a disaster committee. Money was raised by "walkathons" in which each person who walked asked others to sponsor a pledge for the distance walked (sponsors included Sikaiana as well as people from other ethnic groups). The Sikaiana migrants also held fairs in which food, beer, fermented toddy, and raffle prizes were sold. In 1983, weddings and holidays had been the only occasions when large numbers of Sikaiana residing in Honiara gathered together to dance, sing, and drink; in 1987, fund-raising events provided another opportunity for Sikaiana migrants to congregate.

In 1987, the Sikaiana women formed two teams to compete in the Honiara netball league. Other teams in the league were formed around past associations—by former high school teammates, by people who worked in the same business, and, in a few cases, by ethnic groups. The Sikaiana teams were composed entirely of Sikaiana people except for one person from the neighboring Polynesian outlier Ontong Java. One of the Sikaiana teams, Uila (Lightning), consisted largely of younger women; the other, Kaniva (Rainbow), was made up of more-mature women, many of them mothers. Both teams were divided into first and second teams. The teams practiced on most afternoons, and each had its own team colors and uniforms made by its members. Between the members of the two teams, there was usually a good-natured rivalry.

The Sikaiana teams organized their own fund-raising events to support their activities. Uila held Western-style dances in a local clubhouse. Kaniva rented video tapes and charged admission to see them and then charged for food at the event. Kaniva also held a walkathon.

During my stay in the Solomon Islands in 1987, the Sikaiana men living in Honiara, perhaps inspired by the example of the women, organized their own sports club, Vania, named after a large and distinctive

rock that rises above the shallow water on the reef at Sikaiana. Vania was formed to encourage and coordinate Sikaiana sport activities, including preparations for the Solomon Islands entries into the 1988 Olympics in Seoul and participation in various sports leagues in Honiara. Vania also sponsored *kastom* dance practices and performances.

Vania developed a much more formal administrative structure than did either Uila or Kaniva. It had a supervising committee, which held regular meetings and included a president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary in addition to six committee members. Vania's fund-raising events were much larger and better organized than those of Uila and Kaniva; Sikaiana's representative to the National Parliament was invited to speak at one Vania event.

I attended Vania's organizational meeting held in June 1987. The organizers, mostly younger men in their twenties and thirties, conducted the meeting in Pijin rather than the vernacular.⁹ The meeting lasted about three hours and concerned the purpose and activities of the sports club. A Sikaiana man who is a lawyer suggested that they incorporate themselves as a charitable trust. The committee set its membership fees—SI\$5 for a committee member, SI\$2 for a working person, less for members without jobs (US\$1 = SI\$2)—and made rules concerning membership. The activities organized by the club included sports and dancing.¹⁰

By the end of my stay in September 1987, Vania was successfully organizing events. Every Sunday after church service, Sikaiana people gathered at the St. Nicholas School sports fields, behind Bahai Center where several Sikaiana families reside and near the church where many Sikaiana worship. People came from Honiara and its suburbs (including outlying areas such as Tenaru and plantations managed by the Commonwealth Development Corporation). I estimated there were about two hundred people there on one Sunday afternoon, a substantial proportion of the approximately three hundred Sikaiana living in the Honiara area. The participants were almost entirely Sikaiana. There were round-robin matches in which teams of players from various neighborhoods (Kolali, Town Ground, Bahai, Tenaru) competed for small prizes. Women played netball; men played soccer. Refreshments were sold with the proceeds going to the organization.

I also attended two Vania fund-raising events. One was held at the Sikaiana settlement near the Tenaru River outside of Honiara. This area has a lot of open space and is preferred for large Sikaiana community events, including marriage exchanges. Another fund-raising event was

held in the yard of Vania's president, who lives in the Kolali section of Honiara. Both events were organized around similar activities. There was food for sale, including sausage, mincemeat, steak, pig, chicken, and Sikaiana-style taro puddings. A main attraction at such events is beer, which the organizers buy on credit from Honiara merchants and then sell or raffle at increased prices. The profit is turned over to fund-raising committee. Drinking alcohol is often a community event for the Sikaiana and contributes to the enjoyment of festive occasions including marriages and holidays. The entrances to games and amusement areas were decorated with hibiscus and coconut leaf. At both Vania fund-raising events, Sikaiana dancers performed *kastom* dances that they were rehearsing as part of their participation in Vania. After the first few dances, people could request a dance for SI\$2, with the money going to the sports association.

Vania is a hybrid, modeled on both Western administrative institutions and Sikaiana values. The organization is overtly bureaucratic, with membership fees, meetings and offices, a charter, and its incorporation as a charitable trust. It sponsors Western-style fund-raising activities including gambling, bake sales, and cooperative clean-ups. But the importance of alcohol in the fund-raising activities and the involvement of the community are indigenous and parallel behavior on the atoll during festive occasions. Although Vania sponsors the Western sports now popular among the Sikaiana, in particular soccer and netball, it has also encouraged Sikaiana sports (for example, *tautau*, a traditional style of wrestling rarely practiced). Vania also sponsors rehearsals of Sikaiana *kastom* dances. Members perform at weddings and at multicultural dance festivals in Honiara.

Sikaiana people are united by Vania's fund-raising events, Sunday sports competitions, *kastom* dances, and the sport teams. At the same time, the association channels Sikaiana interactions with other ethnic groups in Honiara. *Kastom* dances are performed both to raise money and to display Sikaiana ethnicity to outsiders; teams representing the Sikaiana compete in sports leagues with other Solomon Islanders. Externally, the sports association represents Sikaiana as a distinctive group, an ethnicity, to other Solomon Islanders. Internally, it has united the Sikaiana people residing in Honiara for the purposes of participating together in sports and preserving their community traditions. Both objectives are stated in an official document describing the founding of Vania. The English, although a little awkward, is clear (brackets are added to help clarify meanings):

Perhaps before the establishment of the association, there is a little absorption of Sikaiana tradition, that is the usual way of life of enjoyment such as traditional dances, wrestling (*tautau*) and traditional communal activities by the young generations of today because they tend to [be] attract[ed to] the modern life of Westernization. Therefore it is the hope of the association that these young generations must restore their society's normal life thus with-holding [maintaining] the pride of the Sikaiana tradition and, the only way to prove this is, to perform traditional dances at night club show[s] in the capital and at arts festival[s] to tell the outside world that Sikaiana Islands has never lost its culture today.

Conclusion

Both in the past and at present, songs and dances have been central in Sikaiana life. The content of songs provides commentary on the community's social relations and cultural values. The performances of *puina* reflect the pervasive division in everyday life between men and women, while the content of the songs comments on events and people, often using ridicule to reinforce social norms. In a similar manner, many guitar songs describe contemporary events in terms of Sikaiana cultural values and expectations.

Song and dance can also reflect broader processes of change in Sikaiana social life. Many present-day performances reflect new ethnic and community identities as the Sikaiana have become part of a multiethnic nation. The Sikaiana take songs from a variety of sources and develop them into performances that express their current needs and interests. Shreds and patches from different cultures are stitched together into a contemporary pattern. Tradition is not so much "invented" as it is reconstructed. Guitar music, the *kastom* performances for the visitors and outsiders, and the formation of the Vania sports association are examples that illustrate how the Sikaiana actively develop new expressive forms and traditions.

In their musical presentations, the Sikaiana are both producers and consumers of a cultural activity. In contrast, they are consumers but not producers of the Western popular music played on the radio and on cassette players. The degree to which this Western music replaces indigenous musical performances in the future will reflect the powerful processes that are assimilating the Sikaiana into regional and international

sociocultural systems. But the continued strength of indigenous musical forms at present reflects the vigor with which the Sikaiana have tried to maintain and develop separate identities and a community within which they can control and develop their own expressive culture.

Culture contact and rapid culture change over the past sixty years have resulted in an increased Sikaiana consciousness of themselves as a distinctive community and ethnicity with special traditions that should be preserved and presented. They have incorporated Western institutions into their social life and as the result of emigration have incorporated themselves into the social life of a multicultural nation. Mostly with enthusiasm, they participate in new institutions and practices. But they continue to be concerned with developing ways to define new, distinctive Sikaiana identities, both within their own community and in their relations with other ethnic groups. Expressive culture, including dance, song, and sport, is an important medium for developing, maintaining, and presenting these new identities.

NOTES

This article was stimulated by the presentations and discussions at "The Arts and Politics" session organized by Karen Nero at the 1989 annual meetings of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, held in San Antonio. I borrowed the "shreds and patches" line from Glenn Petersen's comments about Pohnpei. I also incorporated comments made by Eve Pinsker, some of which are acknowledged in the notes. The title is from a song by the Four Tops.

1. This apology and these issues are also discussed in Donner 1987 and Donner 1989. Although I consider my professional area of expertise to be social organization and change, I often find that in discussing these topics I turn to examples from dance and song. Readers, however, are forewarned about my limited training in ethnomusicology. I conducted my fieldwork among the Sikaiana people from October 1980 to July 1983 and from March 1987 to September 1987.

2. J. Clyde Mitchell's classic paper (1956) on ethnicity among African migrants begins with a discussion of a dance.

3. I am influenced by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). I think, however, that "constructed" is a better term than "invented," because the Sikaiana often use existing practices in their dance and song performances. The development of tradition has become a topic of considerable interest and controversy (see Handler and Linnekin 1984; Keesing 1989).

4. The term "curator" is used by Dalby (1983) to describe similar processes among the Japanese *geisha*.

5. There are about sixty different language groups in the Solomon Islands (see Tryon and Hackman 1983).

6. Sikaiana probably borrowed the term *hula* from Luaniua where, as in many Polynesian languages, it means “dance” (Salmond 1975a).

7. By the end of my 1983 stay, the church committee seemed laxer in its supervision of dancing at feasts and parties.

8. In these dances, the dancers form lines. Arm and hip movements seem to me much more elaborate than in most Sikaiana dances. Eve Pinsker has suggested to me that the choreography could have a very definite Sikaiana “accent,” and this merits further study by someone trained in movement. She also made the astute observation that the popularity of these foreign dances is consistent with the value placed on novelty in many Polynesian and Micronesian societies.

9. As already mentioned, most Sikaiana males of this age group claim to be more comfortable speaking Pijin than the vernacular. Furthermore, the secretary of Vania, although born of Sikaiana parents, had been brought up on Ontong Java and did not speak Sikaiana.

10. During one meeting, Vania’s members discussed whether breakdancing was an appropriate activity for its membership. People were concerned that some of the more suggestive movements of breakdancing might be found offensive, not whether the sports association should support nonindigenous dance styles. In fact, a young man did some breakdancing at one Vania fund-raising event.

SYMBOLS OF POWER AND THE POLITICS OF IMPOTENCE: THE MÖLMAHAO REBELLION ON ROTUMA

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- AH: Why is the American flag flying over Mölmahao?
AM: It's not the American flag, it's the United Nations flag.
AH: But the United Nations flag is different; it's blue and white and has an outline of the world on it.
AM: No, this is really the flag of the United Nations; it only looks like the American flag.
AH: Where did you get it from?
AM: From New Zealand.
AH: From Lagfatmarō?
AM: Yes.

Shortly after the second military coup in Fiji, in September 1987, a part-Rotuman man in New Zealand by the name of Henry Gibson announced to the newspapers that he had declared the island of Rotuma independent of Fiji. According to media accounts, Gibson said he was "king" of Rotuma and claimed a popular following on the island. His argument was that Rotuma had been ceded to Great Britain separately from Fiji, and that when Fiji became a republic and left the Commonwealth, it had lost the right to govern Rotuma. He petitioned the queen of England for recognition of Rotuma's status as an independent state that would remain within the Commonwealth. His plea went unheeded, but his followers on Rotuma created a new islandwide council intended to replace the Council of Rotuma (composed of chiefs and dis-

strict representatives). As a result, they were arrested and charged with sedition.

Gibson claims to have had a dream visitation from the first three *sau* (kings) of Rotuma and a *sauhani* (queen). He says they urged him to return to Rotuma to clean up the Mölmahao "foundation" in the district of Noatau, which was presumably the place from which their titles came. The Mölmahao foundation is one of many named housesites (*fūag ri*) on Rotuma that have been unoccupied for many years.¹ The visitants also told him to take the title "Lagfatmarō" (unconquerable victor). This title belonged to the first *sau*, Gibson alleges, and thus entitled him, Gibson, to become *sau*.²

Three flags now fly atop poles in front of the Mölmahao foundation. One is the Union Jack. It symbolizes the commitment of Gibson's followers to the Deed of Cession, by which Rotuma's chiefs ceded the island to Great Britain in 1881. It also embodies the hope that the queen will recognize the plight of Rotuma and support the move toward independence from Fiji. The second flag was designed by Henry Gibson. It is the Mölmahao flag. It consists of a gold circle on a purple background; radiating out of the circle are gold stars and gold stripes (Figure 1). In a letter responding to my inquiry, Gibson wrote that "the meaning of the flag which flies at 'MOLMAHAO' is the sacred 'FA'APUI' of KING GAGAJ SAU LAGFATMARO also performed in the KAVA CEREMONY" (pers. com., 26 Sept. 1988; Gibson's emphasis). It is thus his personal symbol.³ The third flag is Old Glory, mistaken by the Mölmahao group for a symbol of the United Nations. To them it signifies the hope that the United Nations will support their leader's declaration of independence (Gibson sent a letter to the general secretary of the United Nations presenting his case for Rotuma's autonomy). To me it signifies that most of the symbols that Gibson has imposed on his followers are empty of cognitive significance for Rotumans. They are therefore weak symbols for mobilizing sentiment.

Flags are not the only type of political symbolism used by Gibson. He has continually stressed the need to revive Rotuman culture in the form of artifactual and performative restorations. For him, it appears, traditional forms of art and craft hold the key to tapping the spiritual powers of the ancestors, and thus to enhancing Rotuma's political potency. Most modern Rotumans do not share this view. As a result, Gibson can be seen as overestimating the effectiveness of traditional arts and crafts as political symbols. In addition, he has imposed new forms that signify potency to him but that have no roots in Rotuman culture whatsoever.

In this article I focus on the the array of artifacts, performances, and



FIGURE 1. The Mölmahao flag and stone *kava* bowl.

symbols that have been used to represent the Mölmahao movement. To provide a framework for assessing Gibson's use of art forms and to set the stage for analysis, I begin by providing a brief historical overview of the relationship between art, rank, and politics on the island of Rotuma.

Art, Rank, and Politics on Rotuma

At the time of the first recorded European contact, in 1791, Rotuma had a range of well-developed art forms, including tattooing, the making of shell ornaments, the manufacture of fine mats, oratory, chanting, and singing and dancing. By the end of the nineteenth century, some of these forms of expressive culture had completely disappeared and others were drastically altered. Tattooing, for example, described as prevalent by most early observers,⁴ was prohibited by European missionaries who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century. When I first visited Rotuma, in 1960, none of the old people were tattooed. Nowadays a number of young men are tattooed, especially those who have spent some time as sailors, but there are no practitioners of the art on Rotuma, and the tattoos have little symbolic significance.

The manufacture of shell and whale-tooth ornaments, used to designate rank in the precolonial era, also ended before the turn of the twentieth century. Traditionally, chiefs wore necklets of whales' teeth, which were generally buried with them as one of their most valued possessions (Gardiner 1898:412). Chiefs also wore pearl-shell breastplates, shaped by removing the horny layer and smoothing so the shell retained its original shape. MacGregor, who visited Rotuma in 1932, includes in his field notes a drawing of three shells strung into a necklace with braided sennit. A typed note referring to the drawing states (MacGregor n.d.): "The half shell of mother of pearl made into necklace for the kings of Rotuma who wore them around their neck. Found in the tombs."⁵

Today there are no special ornaments that designate chiefly rank.⁶ Nor can contemporary chiefs be identified by special articles of clothing as was the case in the past. Lesson, who visited the island in 1824, described the Rotumans' usual clothing as "made from the fairest and finest weavings." He added that "the weavings they wrap themselves in are beautiful, superior to any made by the Tahitians" (Lesson 1838–1839:423–424). One type of fine mat, the *tofua*, was made from pandanus leaves (*sa'aga*) and was worn by chiefs and the *sau* (Gardiner 1898:412; MacGregor n.d.). Chiefs also wore a girdle of woven *sa'aga* over their wraparounds.

Gardiner describes the dress of the *sau* and his officers as follows:

The dress of the *sou* consisted of a fine mat, over which the *malhida* [chiefly girdle] was worn. This dress was made of the leaves of the *saaga* (*Pandanus* sp.?), split up, and plaited together like sinnet at the top, and hanging down loose. They were stained for the most part red, but some might be left white. Black was sometimes introduced by means of the bark of the *si*, a species of banana, which on drying turns a dull black. Another dress, pertaining to some of the officers, was the *olōli*; it appears to have been really a sort of apron, made of a fine mat, and hung down in front. It was almost completely covered with the red feathers of the *arumea* (*Myzomela chermesina*, Gray); its use was restricted to particular feasts. Round the neck might be a necklace of beads of whale's teeth, the *tifui lei*, and on each wrist the *muleli*, described to me as a round piece of turtle bone. I dug one up when I opened the graves of the *mua*; it is certainly not bone, but resembles somewhat the horny and prismatic layers of the outer part of a pearl shell. It is about 2 inches in diameter, and has a large hole in the center. . . . On the breast was the pearl shell, *tiaf hapa*, but the really distinctive part was the *malhida*, which it was taboo for any one else to wear. The *muleli* was only worn by the *mua* as well as the *sou*, but the other ornaments were more generally used.⁷ (1898:462)

Rotuman women still make fine mats (*apei*), which are important articles of exchange on ceremonial occasions. Chiefs (or rather their wives) are required to bring *apei* to weddings, funerals, and other special events, and their prestige is affected by the number and quality of mats they are able to provide.

The ritual significance of mats remains prominent even though their religious underpinnings have long since been subverted. Traditionally, white mats were consecrated by the sacrifice of a pig prior to their manufacture. They therefore symbolized life and, since pigs were sacrificial substitutes for humans, human life. Today, white mats are rarely consecrated in this way, but they retain symbolic potency.⁸ *Apei* lend enormous weight to any form of request or apology. It is very difficult indeed to turn down an appeal backed up with a white mat.⁹

Fine white mats are also used as seats (*päega*) and covers in ritual contexts. The bride and groom at a wedding, honored guests at a

mamasa (welcoming ceremony), or any others on whom special status is being conferred sit on an *apei* during ceremonies. Symbolically, this elevates them to a status equivalent to that of chiefs. *Apei* are also used to cover gifts of food on special occasions and as canopies to sanctify special people or items (such as a wedding cake).

Of all the traditional forms of artifactual production, fine white mats retain the strongest symbolic significance on Rotuma. How long this will remain the case is problematic, however, given drastically reduced interest in their manufacture by the younger generation.

In contrast to artifactual production, the performing arts have retained more vigor, although loss and transformation are evident here as well. One can identify four traditional forms of performance in Rotuma: oratory and chanting, dancing and singing, clowning, and *kava* ceremonies. Since Henry Gibson introduced into Rotuma a new kind of performance, karate exhibitions, and has proposed a new form for the *kava* ceremony, it is of some relevance to our analysis to consider briefly the nature of these traditional performances.

Little has been written on Rotuman oratory, in part, perhaps, because oratory is not the highly developed art it is in many other Polynesian societies. Nevertheless, oratorical skills are valued by Rotumans, and there is some evidence to suggest they always have been. In the past, the telling of legends was one form of oratory. When chiefs wished to be entertained, they would prepare a feast and invite a storyteller to perform (MacGregor n.d.). According to some of my informants, elders would get together to share their knowledge of genealogies and local history, some of which was preserved in chant form. Today few people who claim to have such knowledge are willing to share it, but those who do may become a focal point for admirers, who provide an eager audience.

A better-preserved form of oratory concerns speeches, mostly to thank those who have donated labor, food, and other goods on ceremonial occasions. Chiefs of all ranks are expected to make speeches in such circumstances, but oratory is not confined to chiefs. Church and government officials also address audiences on various occasions, and guests who have been honored, regardless of sex or rank, usually offer thanks in a formal or quasi-formal way. Chiefs also make speeches to inspire their subjects to work hard, to donate to a cause, or to promote community harmony.

Two other arenas for speechmaking are community meetings and the Methodist church. At village or district meetings, individuals often express their views in an eloquent, sometimes passionate manner. The

object is to be persuasive without being abrasive, to convince without alienating. Some of the most admired speakers never raise their voices. To Rotumans soft-spoken speech signifies humility, which is a valued trait in chiefs and commoners alike.

The Methodist church provides a number of roles requiring oratory, including ministers, catechists, and lay preachers. Although there are only a few ministers on the island at any given time, each of the fourteen churches has a catechist and a large number of lay preachers, including some women. Lay preachers rotate assignments between the churches and so are often in the position of visiting dignitaries. For the most part, preaching is based more on Western models than on traditional Rotuman oratory, which contains repetitive formulas. Preachers often start off softly and build to crescendos. Some are prone to making vigorous gestures to punctuate their speeches, a style that contrasts with traditional Rotuman oratory, in which gestures and facial expressions are of little significance. Regardless of context, however, effective speakers are admired in Rotuma, and oratory is a vital part of the contemporary culture.

Chanting likewise has retained vitality, although mostly in the form of songs sung during traditional dances (*tautoga*). Kaurasi divides dance songs into four groups: (1) those depicting social functions in which two parties entertain one another; (2) those indicating events that led to wars; (3) those referring to the loss of a friend or relative; and (4) those referring to overseas trips and safe returns. He also identifies two other types of Rotuman chants: those sung before wrestling matches or before a war, which aimed at inspiring one's own combatants and intimidating one's competitors or enemy; and those sung when receiving a chief or at the funeral of a chief (Kaurasi 1991:144). Neither of these latter forms of chanting are common now, but they are performed on occasion.

Of all the Rotuman art forms, composing songs for special occasions and choreographing *tautoga* dances have survived with the most vigor. Prior to a special event, the group chosen to perform meets regularly for rehearsals, and a good deal of pride is involved. On grand occasions several groups may perform in a competitive context, with prizes being awarded to the winners. Good composers are especially admired. According to Hereniko: "A good *purotu* [composer] is judged on the aptness of his choice of words, which should 'cut deep into the heart of the listener', on the actions chosen to portray his poetry, and the melody. It is also very important that his allusions be suitable for the occasion and the individuals being honoured" (1977:132). In addition to the preparation of songs for *tautoga*, lyrics are composed for modern instru-

ments such as guitars. They are sung at special events such as *höt'äk hafu* (ceremonial unveiling of a gravestone), in which case they honor the memory of the deceased and his or her close relations. Churches provide still another arena for musical creativity, with hymn-singing competitions occurring frequently. Several individuals on the island are well known for their abilities as hymn writers. Thus singing and dancing are among the most powerful media for communicating messages and mobilizing sentiment in contemporary Rotuma.

Finally, mention should be made of the *kava* ceremony, which can be considered a form of dramatic performance. As in other Polynesian societies, important ceremonies on Rotuma require the presentation, preparation, and serving of *kava* to chiefs and dignitaries. The basics of the traditional *kava* ceremony in Rotuma are well described by Gardiner (1898:424–425) and MacGregor (n.d.), from whose accounts the following composite description draws.

At feasts chiefs take their place in the “front” of the ceremonial site,¹⁰ with the highest-ranking chief in the middle. Behind him is his *mafua* (spokesman), who conducts the ceremony. The *kava* roots are brought to the site at the head of a procession of men bearing food. The *kava* is placed so that the roots point toward the chiefs, the leaves away. The presentation is acknowledged by the *mafua*, who calls out, “*Kava*.” The man who is tending the *kava* then breaks off a small branch from the root, stabs the root with it, and shouts, “*Manu!*”¹¹ The *mafua* then recites a *fakpej*, a chantlike recitation.¹² If more than one bundle of roots are being presented, this ceremony may be repeated, with additional *fakpej* being chanted.

After the *fakpej*, the *mafua* calls the names of the chiefs to whom a piece of *kava* root is to be presented. The man tending the *kava* cuts off one piece of root for each chief. A final piece is cut off and given to the women to be washed and chewed. After sufficient chewing, the *mafua* calls out for the woman who will mix it to wash her hands. The chewed *kava* is then put into a *tanoa* (*kava* bowl) with water and is mixed with a *vehnau* (strips of cloth from the bark of the hau tree). The *kava* maker strains the brew through the cloth, then passes it back to an attendant, who wrings it out while a second attendant pours water over the *kava* maker's hands. When the *kava* maker is finished with the preparation, she calls out, “*Kavaite*” (The *kava* is ready).

The *mafua* then calls out “*mārie', mārie', mārie'!*” which draws attention to the proceedings, much in the manner that “hear, hear!” does in English-speaking settings. The *kava* maker then lays down the *vehnau* and claps twice with her hands cupped, then once loudly with her palms flat. The *mafua* again calls “*mārie', mārie', mārie'!*”

The second attendant brings an *ipu* (coconut shell cup) to the bowl, and the *kava* maker lifts the *vehnau* and drains *kava* into it. The attendant then says, "*Kava taria*" (The *kava* is ready).

The *mafua* then calls out, "*Taukavitē se Maraf* [or the name of the highest-ranking person present]" (Take the *kava* to Maraf). The attendant bears the *kava* to the person whose name has been called out and, stooping low, hands it to him. She then returns to the bowl and, when the cup is refilled, calls out again, "*Kava taria*." The process is repeated until all the chiefs and dignitaries are served in order of rank.

Kava presentations remain a central part of any ceremony performed in contemporary Rotuma, but they lack formality and the sense of drama that accompanies performances in Fiji and Samoa. Rotumans today conduct the ceremony in an almost casual manner. And *kava* is no longer chewed but is pounded with an iron pestle. Elders constantly offer advice to the various participants. They discuss who should be served when and continually negotiate procedures. Few people seem to be certain about protocol. Furthermore, many who serve as *mafua* no longer know any of the traditional *fakpej* and make them up as they go along. In some of the recent presentations I observed, the *mafua* made the *fakpej* into a series of humorous utterances, turning it into a joke; no one seemed to mind. Few contemporary Rotumans, and no one in a position of power, seem to be concerned about the authenticity of such performances.¹³

The art forms presented here represent the array of options open to someone who would use metaphors or symbols to mobilize political sentiment among Rotumans. Against this background I now turn to examine the actions of Henry Gibson in his attempt to assume a leadership role vis-à-vis Rotuma's independence from Fiji.

The Mölmahao Movement

Henry Gibson is the great-grandson of a Scotsman who resided on Rotuma during the mid-nineteenth century and a Rotuman woman of high rank from the chiefly district of Noatau. Raised on Rotuma, he emigrated to Fiji as a teenager. He took up martial arts, trained in Japan, and attained the status of grand master. He founded the Jyoishin Mon Tai Kiok Kuen Kung Fu Society, which has numerous branches in the Pacific region, including Australia and New Zealand, where he now resides.

In 1981 Gibson returned to Rotuma for the centennial celebration of the island's cession to Great Britain. The centennial was a grand affair, marked by the opening of an airstrip, feasting, and numerous cultural

performances. Gibson was invited by the Council of Rotuma to give a martial arts demonstration, and he obliged. It must have been a memorable event, for people can still describe in detail how he broke cement blocks and timber with his hands, and how he threw mock attackers into the sea. The demonstration earned him a good deal of admiration among the Rotuman people, and many joined the classes that he offered.

While his reputation grew with his kinsmen and some devoted followers, it began to sour with many others. They complained about his irreverence toward Christianity and his womanizing, which they claim created friction in the community and provoked marital breakups. They also found the regimen he required of his students, including long periods of time in the bush, overly arduous.

After a time on Rotuma, Gibson returned to New Zealand and, according to a letter he wrote to me, had "an astral experience with the ancient ones." He described it as follows; I present his notations, punctuation, and spelling in order to give the full flavor of the text:

about I. A.M. in the morning, a very tall man came to me. He was of light complexion and very muscular, I felt a very strong vibration emanating from his presence. . . . I sense that he was a very spiritual and noble individual. One who has mastery over the - "elements".

He introduced himself as - "GAGAJ UR-JEKE". That he was there to inform and to instruct me of the lost history of - "HANUA-MA-FU'ETA" known as . . . "ROTU - MA-MA" pronounced to-day as - ROTUMA. He took me to ROTUMA, and showed many very interesting things. Most important was the sacred foundation—"MOL-MA-HAO." (to ascend and bow) Situated at the east end of the island known then as - "MAF-NE-HA-NU'ETA" (EYE OF THE LAND) white sand stretched from the present shore-line, to almost the base of the foot-hills the mountains were treeless very few coconut trees. I would estimate the population to approximately-500-I,000 there were no districts, all the dwellings were in-land and I was informed that because of the unusual unrest of the sea, volcanic rocks were used as foundation.

"MOL-MA-HAO" foundation was one of its kind. It stood majestically like a pyramid especially designed to preserve certain records, to with-stand time and as a monument to bear witness for-ever. I was asked to enter the house by a lady who

spoke from with-in when I entered, there were only three people in-side. A lady and two men. "GAGAJ UR-JEKE" remained outside talking to three other men whose bodies were covered with -TATTOO a design and pattern assimilating the carveings on the eight posts and the intricate binding of coconut sinet on the rafters supporting the huge beam at the very top of the house.¹⁴ The lady introduced herself as – "SAU HANI" and asked me to sit in the centre and to offer and to serve the – "KING" his "KAVA". The man who sat facing SAU HANI, said his name was – "GAGAJ KAU-SAK-MUA". When I served the kings KAVA, the king held the KAVA bowl for about 5 mins. and said – "ITS BEEN A VERY LONG TIME, SINCE I DRANK KAVA. I want you to have my KAVA BOWL and to – UNTIE MY FA'APUI and when it is done, I GAGAJ SAU LAGFATMARO will LIVE. ALL THAT IS HAPPENING NOW WHICH DID NOT HAPPEN IN MY TIME, I WILL SEE TO IT."

"SAU HANI" showed me how to mix the KAVA and its true meaning, the symbolic meaning of the offering of the – "FOUR" KAVA BOWLS in the "UMEF" KAVA before the KAVA is served. The – "KAVA NE ROTUMA" is dedicated to the "AITU MAN-MAN TA", the memory of – "HANUA-MA-FUETA" and the existence of . . . "HANUA-HA-TA". The true meaning of the KAVA CEREMONY in ROTUMA is "ROTU-MA-MA."

It is clear from this text that Gibson is fascinated by Rotuman words and is engaged in a quest for meaning through their interpretation. What he writes as "HANUA-MA FU'ETA" would ordinarily be written as *hanua mafue ta* (the ancient land, or possibly, land of the ancestors). Broken down into its component parts, KAU-SAK-MUA (ordinarily written *Kausakmua*) might be translated as "to support, to display vigor, first or in front" or "one who supports the leader." However, in this context it might stand for *kava* (pronounced *kao* when followed by a modifier), "to strain or sieve first or in front" or "one who prepares *kava* for the leader." The *kava* of Rotuma, he writes, is dedicated to the "AITU MAN-MAN TA" (*aitu manman ta*), or "efficacious god," the memory of "the ancient land," and the existence of HANUA-HA-TA (probably *hanua ha' ta*), "the sacred land."

In another part of the letter, he explains the meanings of the names LAGFATMARO and ROTU-MA-MA:

Interpretation and meaning of the name "GAGAJ SAU LAGFATMARO" is – "CHIEF KING OF THE PREVAILING WIND".

This name was given to honour the principle Forces which destroyed – “HANUA-MA-FUETA” the ancient “Continent” or “Land of Our Forefathers” . . . “THE LAND OF THE-BEGINNING”. The destruction of – “HANUA-MA-FUETA” gave cause for the ancestors who survived to revere the ancient land of our Forefathers as – “HANUA-HA‘A”. (The sacred Land of our ancestors. “Land of the departed SOUL’s”). The birth realm of the – “PURE ‘AG-HIFU-MAF-NE-LAG-HEKE” – (“SEVEN KINGDOMS” and the . . . “EYE OF THE FOUR WIND’S.” The ancestors who survived and found this piece of land remaining performed a ceremony – a “FAPUI” – A BINDING OF SACREDNESS”. This was to mark the – “(ARAG) – (VAKA)” the catastrophe that had befallen “HANUA-MA-FUETA” and the sad memories of the many lives lost.

This sacred or “FAPUI” land was named by the “APEI-AITU” (High Priests)¹⁵ as – “ROTU- (MA) -MA” (devotion and faith) Pronounced – ROTUMA. A ruler was selected to voice the administration of law, religion, science, arts, culture, tradition etc. etc. on this small and sacred place. The title given to the first King and Ruler was – “GAGAJ SAU LAGFATMARO”.

“GAGAJ SAU LAGFATMARO “is the great grandson of ‘APEI AITU” ———“GAGAJ RAMAG-FON.” The names of the other priests and elders “GAGAJ APIAG-FON”. “GAGAJ OTIAG-FON”. “GAGAJ URJEKE”. “GAGAJ TEOK”. ———— “GAGAJ RAPE‘OK”. “VOI-MO-MOK”.

None of the names Gibson mentions, including Lagfatmarō, appear in myths or legends reported by previous generations of European visitors who collected oral histories. They may still be a genuine part of Rotuma’s oral history, but that they are unknown to all others I have talked to suggests that they are esoteric to a small group at best. I should point out here that most Rotumans have little knowledge of traditional myths, nor are they versed in Rotuman history. There are few people alive, therefore, who are prepared to dispute Gibson’s claims, which were given support by an elder kinsman who had taken the title Kausakmua.¹⁶ Kausakmua purportedly traced Gibson’s genealogy back to the original Lagfatmarō.¹⁷ Gibson has rightfully pointed out that most Rotumans can only trace their ancestry back three or four generations (*Fiji Times*, 7 Jan. 1983:24), so Kausakmua’s genealogy has gone essentially unchallenged.

Gibson returned to Rotuma and was formally given the title of Gagaj Sau Lagfatmarō on Christmas Eve 1982 by members of his kin group. According to the *Fiji Times* account, Gibson’s “clan” honored him with

an "ageless" lei made of rare cowrie shells, which they placed on his shoulders.¹⁸ The newspaper also reported that Gibson would be returning to New Zealand and then traveling to visit his studio in Sydney, leaving Kausakmua to run things for him on Rotuma and keep him informed.

The following day, another article appeared, stating that "Martial Arts grandmaster Professor Henry Gibson has rebuilt the Mulmahao in Rotuma intending to turn it into a museum" (*Fiji Times*, 8 Jan. 1983:30). "Mulmahao," the article states, is the ancient site of a chiefly house consisting of eight posts with two very low doors facing east and west. It goes on to report that Gibson's clan is using the housesite for meetings and that they are collecting artifacts from around the island. The article quotes Gibson as saying that the museum is for tourists who might visit the island as a result of the new airport. He also is reported to have said: "People have to go back to tradition and cultural values in order to get their identity. Otherwise there will be none."

In fact, structures were built on two sites on Rotuma by Gibson and his followers. One site, a tall mound, is presumed to be the original house foundation of Lagfatmarō. A small thatched hut has been built on it. The museum, referred to in the news item cited above, is perhaps a kilometer away, on land belonging to Gibson's family. The museum is a thatched building open on all sides, but with a low entranceway, forcing a visitor to bend down upon entering.¹⁹ It is adjacent to Gibson's home.

A few months later, another article appeared in the *Fiji Times*. It was titled "Call for Rotuman Antiques" and read as follows:

Rotumans are seeking the return of their traditional artefacts from Fiji and other countries.

The Rotuma Island Council, presided by Mr. T. M. Varea, has authorized Gagaj Sau Lagfatmaro, commonly known as Professor Henry Gibson, to ask for the return of the artefacts. Professor Gibson said people had dug up ancient items in Rotuma despite the disapproval of the islanders.

He said a former District Officer at Rotuma, Mr. Aubry Parke, had reported that he had dug out an ancient yaqona bowl. Mr. Parke, who now lives in Brisbane, said that the bowl was at the Fiji Museum.

Professor Gibson said he had written to the Director of the Fiji Museum, Mr. Fergus Clunie, seeking the return of the artefacts and that he had also visited him.

Professor Gibson said bones taken from Rotuma should be

returned to the island as everyone would like their ancestors to be buried in one place.

He said that with the artefacts, "Maybe Rotuma could have a museum one day."

All Rotuman artefacts in the museum were recorded, he said, except the yaqona bowl. And Mr. Clunie doubted that the artefacts could be returned to Rotuma.

Professor Gibson said he would send the letter from the Council with a covering note to other museums in the world which have Rotuman artefacts.

He said he hoped the artefacts were returned soon and that the Rotuman people would co-operate in helping them restore their culture and dignity.

He said other people would not know the value of the items except if they treasured it.

Professor Gibson is a high chief of Rotuma.

(*Fiji Times*, 30 May 1983:10)

This article signaled a dispute that arose between Gibson and the then director of the Fiji Museum, Fergus Clunie, over the disposition of Rotuman artifacts. Clunie refused to recognize Gibson's legitimacy as a spokesman for Rotumans and objected to his untutored fossicking into archaeological sites. He threatened to take legal action to have artifacts retrieved from unauthorized digs confiscated and taken to the Fiji Museum.

In response to a November article in the *Times* questioning his legitimacy, Gibson replied that the revival of his title had brought a renewed interest in family links and Rotuman cultural awareness. In a letter to the editor he repeated his request that the stone *kava* bowl taken from Rotuma by Aubry Parke be returned (*Fiji Times*, 12 Dec. 1983:6). The bowl, he stated, is of religious and ceremonial significance to the "Clan Molmahao." He also complained about being referred to in the previous article as a martial arts "exponent":

An exponent is simply one who practices or demonstrates martial arts for the record. I am a Grand Master Renshi Sihan (Professor) qualified in the philosophy of the art and not merely the physical aspects as practised by an "exponent."

One of the essential aspects of the martial arts philosophy emphasises truth to one's self and one's principles and respect for all human life.

This aspect of the truth and humanity is embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Articles, 2, 12, 18, 26 and 27—United Nations Charter 1984.

It applies to us, the Rotuman people of Fiji, in our request to regain our Umef Kava [*kava* bowl] and our right to establish a cultural centre in our home Island of Rotuma. To this end I will persevere until we are treated with dignity and our tanoa [*kava* bowl] is returned.

In 1983 the district chief of Noatau died, leaving the title of Maraf, the highest-ranking name on the island, vacant. Throughout recorded history, the head chief of Noatau has held the Maraf title.²⁰ Under somewhat clouded circumstances,²¹ a school teacher from another district was selected by the kin group holding rights to the title (*mosega*) and was installed as the new Maraf. Gibson objected on the grounds that the newly installed chief was from another district,²² and he demanded that the Lagfatmarō title be recognized as “parallel” to that of Maraf and that he be installed as chief (*Fiji Times*, 10 Jan. 1985:3). An interesting debate followed, in which detractors asserted that the title of Lagfatmarō was not recognized in Rotuma, and the Mölmahao group argued that Maraf was not a Rotuman title but a variant of Ma’afu, the name of a Tongan who conquered Rotuma, presumably in the seventeenth century.²³ Gibson is quoted as saying, “The revival of the title Gagaj Sau Lagfatmaro is an attempt on my part to revive the true culture, tradition and identity of the people of Rotuma,” and “The existence of politics in the election of chiefs in Rotuman [sic] is destroying our culture” (*Fiji Times*, 16 Jan. 1985:8).

Gibson was unable, however, to elicit support from the Rotuman community at large, and his ambitions went unrealized. In fact, his claims vis-à-vis the Lagfatmarō title are paradoxical. According to all historical accounts, the office of *sau* was rotated between districts, for restricted periods of time. *Sau* were appointed by the *fakpure*, the highest-ranking district chief at any given time. The term of a *sau* was six months—one ritual cycle—although some officeholders were reappointed for several terms. In the early historical period, from 1797 until 1870 when the institution was abandoned as a result of pressure from Christian missionaries, sixty-six different individuals are reported as having held the *sau* title (Sumi Mission Station n.d.). The *sau*’s role was to take part in the ritual cycle, oriented toward ensuring prosperity, as an object of veneration. As a figurehead, he represented the entire polity against parochial interests (see Howard 1985 for an extended discus-

sion of Rotuman kingship). Gibson, responding to angry protestations that he was inappropriately claiming to be "king of Rotuma," insisted that he was only claiming to be king of the Mölmahao clan, which, he asserted, includes the seven districts by virtue of its primal origin. Thus he is claiming to be *sau*, a nonhereditary position, on the basis of genealogical descent. He also officially claims to be *sau* of only one kin group; yet the very essence of the *sau*'s role was the representation of the entire polity.

Toward the end of 1985, the dispute concerning rights over cultural artifacts between Gibson and his followers, on the one hand, and Fergus Clunie of the Fiji Museum, on the other, reached a climax. The specific item at issue was the cowrie shell necklace that had been bestowed on Gibson at his installation in 1982. The necklace was allegedly unearthed from a grave at the Mölmahao foundation and, according to Gibson, belonged to the original Lagfatmarō.²⁴ This "heirloom" had come to be seen by Gibson's supporters as having supernatural powers. They claim it has oracular powers, that it answers questions by moving if the answer is "yes" and staying still if the answer is "no."

On 30 November, Clunie arrived in Rotuma with a warrant signed by Fiji's chief magistrate to take the shells to the Fiji Museum for "safe keeping." Gibson's followers protested the action and refused to give up the necklace. Clunie enlisted the help of the police on the island, but they were turned away by the Mölmahao group. As a result, the chief magistrate, the director of public prosecutions, a government prosecutor, and a contingent of police went to Rotuma by chartered airplane on 4 December. Gibson was charged under Fiji's Archaeological and Paleolithical Interests Act with systematically digging up the graves of his ancestors to remove traditional artifacts and putting them in his museum in Noatau. Gibson's lawyer arrived on the same flight (*Fiji Times*, 4 Dec. 1985:1).

On the eve of the court trial, Gibson is quoted as saying: "No one is going to take away the necklace. It is going to draw blood if someone tries. . . . Irrespective of what happens in the court, the necklace is not going." He continued: "The clan which bestowed this on me will not allow anybody to remove it from the island. Their heirloom is the heart and soul of the clan and is the symbol of their king" (*Fiji Times Sunday Magazine*, 15 Dec. 1985:7). As a result of the trial, Gibson was acquitted on the count of illegal excavation but was convicted on a second count of illegally keeping artifacts of historical and archaeological interest, namely, the cowrie necklace. However, the magistrate did not make

a ruling on the disposition of the necklace, so the shells were left in the care of the Mölmahao group.

The *Fiji Times* reporter who attended the trial expressed relief at the outcome, inferring that bloodshed would be avoided as a result of the ruling (or rather, nonruling). He wrote:

There is more to the Molmahau Clan and Gagaj Sau Lagfatmaro's culture and tradition consciousness than meets the eye.

The cowrie shells are more than just a symbol of the king. They are also the physical embodiment of what the clan terms the "supreme being".

Gagaj Sau Lagfatmaro's idea of cultural preservation and revival is not only picking up the loose pieces and putting them back together, but to trace their history and origin.

He renounced his Christian upbringing the day his name was converted from Henry Gibson and now worships the "supreme being" through his elaborate morning and evening "yaqona" rituals.

These rituals have attracted adverse comments and he has suffered silently from accusations of "voodooism, witchcraft, paganism, devil worshipper . . ." from his own people—the Rotumans.

The rituals include two kava sessions. The first one is a sole devotion by the king. Close aides are invited to a second. The second session includes the blowing of the conch shell.

"This is the practice of our ancestors," he said. "It does not mean that I do not respect the religion of other people, but at the same time I must also expect them to respect ours."

It is this deep commitment, to Rotuman culture acknowledged by the Chief Magistrate while passing judgement, and an unwaivering stand for recognition and respect for which they are prepared to fight. (*Fiji Times Sunday Magazine*, 15 Dec. 1985:7)

The article is accompanied by a picture of Gibson wearing the necklace at the Mölmahao foundation shrine, with a picture of Gibson wearing the necklace in the background—that picture is the sole decoration in the shrine.

As part of his judgment, the chief magistrate directed Gibson to make every effort to catalogue all artifacts in his possession and supply infor-

mation about them to the Fiji Museum. He thereby implicitly gave official sanction to the activities of the Mölmahao Cultural Centre and Museum. During the trial, testimony from the chairman of the Council of Rotuma also confirmed that Gibson had been given authority by the council to collect historical artifacts and preserve them.

The Rotuman Cultural Centre and Museum

Just outside the thatched building that serves as the cultural center is a sign in Rotuman and English. The English version reads:

CULTURAL CENTRE AND MUSEUM OF
MÖLMAHAO NOA'IA-E-TAU ROTU-MA-MA
DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF
ROTUMAN CULTURE AND TRADITION
GAGAJ SAU LAGFATMARO
11 JANUARY 1984

Immediately under this sign is another one:

PRIVATE PROPERTY
TRESPASSERS
WILL BE
PROSECUTED

The contradiction between the museum as guardian of Rotuman culture and its being private property evidently escaped Gibson and his followers. There are no comparable signs anywhere else on the island.

A rather indistinct logo painted on a round plaque is attached to two red beams, which are fastened to the tops of two poles, forming a gate (resembling a Japanese torii) to the building (Figure 2). When I asked what the plaque represented, I was given a vague answer—that it might be a shark “or something.” In response to my query, Henry Gibson offered the following explanation in his letter:

The logo that appears on the sign at the Cultural-Centre also shows – “THE SEVEN HEADED SERPENT” coiled around the “SHARK.” (THE SUPREME PRINCIPLE OF LIFE – “AITU'MAN-MAN” the source of all forces, and supreme controller of all – “ACTIVE FORCE’S”)

The logo also speak of – “WHAT TIME, HOUR, HOW and WHEN – TO OFFER THE KAVA OF – ROTU(MA) MA.” To follow the true mean-



FIGURE 2. Entrance to the Mölmahao Cultural Centre and Museum.

ing of the – “LOGO” requires (a) LOVE. (b) SINCERITY. (c) PATIENCE. (d) COURAGE.

This logo is on all of his correspondence and in the center of his personal seal.

My wife and I obtained permission from the center’s caretaker to visit the Cultural Centre in 1987. He, with an aide, took us inside, showed us the exhibit, described the nature of its operations and tried, as best he could, to explain the symbolic significance of key items.

Just inside the gate is a small thatched building, open at one end, with a bar that is designed to serve drinks to anticipated tourists. It is not otherwise open for business. Next to this building is a larger one, also of thatch, which houses the collection. It is open on all sides, with a roof that comes to within two or three feet of the ground. We were told that the Rotuman name of the building is Hual Hofuena (Rising of the Moon). The building has an east-west orientation with the front facing east.

Visitors are required to remove their shoes before entering the ceremonial and display area. The entranceway is low, and one has to bend down to enter. Inside are shelves with a variety of stone and shell artifacts (adzes, necklaces, and ornaments), most of obviously recent manu-

facture, and a few skulls. Hanging from the walls are examples of Rotuman basketware, and from the roof a *kokona* (food container).²⁵

In the center of the hut is a stone artifact shaped like a *tanoa* that reportedly was found upside down in the sea at a location indicated by Gibson after a dream. Allegedly the men who accompanied Gibson in the canoe could not lift it, but he dived in and had no trouble raising it. It is a rather crude artifact with what may be handles on the sides, but without clear indications of human workmanship.

There is also a stone *tanoa* at the east end of the hut sitting on top of two large stones (see Figure 1). This was described as a *kava* bowl that belonged to Fonmanu, brother of Lagfatmarō. He has a legendary reputation for inseminating Rotuman women who came to him from the various districts in order to have children of "royal" blood. The legend of Fonmanu is the basis for the unorthodox spelling of Noatau on the center's sign—Noa'ia-e-Tau. In his letter to me, Gibson related the tale in the following terms:

The paramount chiefly clans of the present seven districts in ROTUMA ("es ne ITU'U") OBTAINED THEIR ROYALTY FROM "FAR SAU" (requesting Royalty) from "MOLMAHAO" via "GAGAJ SAU FONMON." On his death bed - GAGAJ SAU LAGFATMARO sent his younger brother - GAGAJ FONMON from MOLMAHAO to - "FIKEOKO" erea to protect and administrate for his young children. GAGAJ FONMON was to come under his two elder brothers - GAGAJ KAUSAKMUA and GAGAJ MATAER. Unfortunately GAGAJ FONMON did not comply with his elder brother's wishes and overruled his two older brothers and took affairs into his own hands. Isolated tribes throughout ROTUMA now came to him and presented their daughters begging for a link to royalty through him. This is how "NOA-IA-E-TAU" (NOATAU) started - "THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE AND COMPASSION" the tribe elders would chant and with various gifts and offerings they would request pardon to be excused to return home and care for their newly expected - "GAGAJ ES NE SAU" (the starting of districts and "ES NE ITU'U").

The Rotuman word *'ese* can mean either "to have" or "to possess," on the one hand, or "offspring" (as a noun), "beget," or "bear" (as a verb), on the other. Ordinarily, district chiefs in Rotuma are referred to as *gagaj 'es itu'u*, which would translate as "chief [who] has a district." Gibson, however, is using *'ese* in the second sense and thus comes up

with “chief [who is] offspring of *sau*” and “begetting of districts.” This usage corresponds to his notion that all the chiefs originally stem from Mölmahao and that the seven districts are derivative from this initial dispersal of the *sau*’s (Fonmanu’s) seed. If this view were accepted, of course, the *sau* of Mölmahao would be senior to all the chiefs and hence paramount chief of the whole island.

Above Fonmanu’s *tanoa* was the Mölmahao flag. According to the caretaker, the flag signifies the four directions. In each direction four of the stripes touch the center, which signifies the world; four additional stripes go beyond to the extremities and do not touch the world. Further discussion suggested that the number eight is sacred in this scheme (there are eight stripes in all);²⁶ according to the caretaker, Gibson says there are seven districts and one *sau*. (When I revisited the center in 1988, a plaque with a yin-yang emblem would rest just below Fonmanu’s *tanoa*, and a Union Jack would hang alongside the Mölmahao flag.)

We were told that, when he is at the Cultural Centre, Gibson sits on a fine white mat (*apei*) across the central stone *tanoa* from the *kava* server, who uses a wooden *tanoa* to serve the *kava*.

To the right of the entrance is a phallic-shaped stone that the caretaker said was the “messenger stone.” Through this medium Lagfatmarō hears everything that goes on in the hut, we were told. He also comes “in spirit” to *kava* servings and, said the caretaker, at night when he comes his shadow is visible as he walks to take his seat. He does not come alone but with seven other ancient *sau*.

In serving the *kava*, the caretaker poured it (in the bowl) for each of the eight *sau*. The ceremony began by the caretaker putting the pounded *kava* into a cheesecloth bag without water; he then chanted, calling the spirits and specifically calling for Lagfatmarō to come. He then put eight *bilo* (coconut cups) of water into the wooden *tanoa* in front of him while his assistant blew a conch shell eight times. The caretaker then poured the *kava* in the bowl once in each direction. With each serving of *kava*, he and his assistant clapped rhythmically. The first seven times they clapped with palms crossed, the final time with fingers out, hands parallel. This is how Lagfatmarō taught them to perform the ceremony, they said.

We were told that Lagfatmarō had written to museums around the world and acquired a set of photographs of Rotuman artifacts, but that in a recent storm they had gotten all wet and were ruined. Indeed the structure does not offer much protection to the artifacts contained within it. On a table near the entrance is a guest book, which has also

been water-damaged. It contains a statement of welcome, written in pen and ink. It reads as follows (ellipses in original):

Thank you for your patience. ("It is my privilege to be able to present to you the past making of Rotuman history in the form made possible for the Rotuman and . . . you the visitor to glimpse.

Throughout the history of mankind the need and determination for survival and the presence of changes has brought about an awareness of reality ". . . the essence of life." This realization has been the cause of which this cultural centre was built. Sufficient evidence of past world history instigated the determination of . . . wills, sacrifice, endurance and love, to house the missing links of Rotuma's past.

Please share with me the exquisite delight in finding the many [unintelligible word] for . . . ancestral bones, artifacts and adzes scattered throughout the island, to be sheltered after performing an ancient ceremony according to the Rotuman tradition and culture . . . for the suspended spirit and ancestral thought suspension. Since my first visit to Rotuma in 1962 I [two unintelligible words] to my horror and disappointment the . . . uncare ancient burial dissolving from once a fine work of art to . . . a heap of total ruin. Share with me the exquisite delight in being the one to present to survival and undertake a mission . . . for the . . . young and . . . for the old generation, for the . . . visitor to, view and hold precious the identity, culture, tradition and religion of Rotu-ma-ma. The name Rotuma means . . . Rotu "devotion" ma "faith" . . . devotion and faith. The attempt to extend the royal Mölmahao Cultural Centre is part of the proposed plan for which a donation of any nature to which the project will be greatly honored and appreciated. I trust that your visit to the Cultural Centre was not a disappointment . . . Indeed like other neighboring islands of the Pacific region, the arrival of Christianity together with whaling ships passing in our waters was . . . responsible for the change of attitude and abduction of many Rotuman artifacts to different parts. An attempt has been made to request the return of Rotuman artifacts back to Rotuma from various world museums by his Royal Highness King Gagaj Sau Lagfatmarō II, of the Royal Mölmahao clan. The response to this request has been tremendously encouraging. Most strengthening confrontation

with the laws of the Fiji Government resulted when the attempt to revive Rotuman culture and tradition was undertaken by the Royal Mölmahao clan elders . . . "truth is forever formless, forever pure. A principle of the highest order in life."

signed: Lagfatmarō

Adulation and the Quest for Power: Visits to Rotuma

Stories abound about Gibson's behavior and the way his followers treat him when he visits Rotuma. I was told that when he arrives (by plane), his followers chant a *ki*, a ceremony traditionally appropriate when a high chief arrives by sea or dies and is carried to the grave (see the section above on traditional arts). According to some accounts, he was carried from the plane to a fine white mat, as a chief would be carried from an arriving boat to the shore, but others deny this.²⁷ Once seated on the white mat, they perform a *mamasa* (welcoming) ceremony, anointing him with oil.²⁸ I was told that his followers carry around an *apei* for Gibson to sit on wherever he goes. Apparently, the chief of the district in which the airport is located issued an order forbidding these ceremonies to be performed there, but the airport manager, a Gibson sympathizer, said he has jurisdiction over the airport and has given permission for their continuance.

When the tourist ship *Fairstar* first visited Rotuma in 1986, some informants allege that Gibson was seated on a white mat, apart from the chiefs, dressed all in white.²⁹ He was fanned by two white women from New Zealand, who accompanied him to Rotuma on that visit,³⁰ and attended to by some of his local followers. Some people complained that Gibson's followers ignored the chiefs and carried out a *kava* ceremony of their own, blowing the conch shell and serving him first.

People also relate stories about Gibson's attempts to communicate with the pre-Christian spirits thought to have inhabited Rotuma and to absorb their power. On one occasion he is said to have gone out to an offshore rock and remained there, fasting, for three or four days, presumably soaking up the *mana* of the island. Allegedly, he has also held sessions on shore, in the company of others, in which he has attempted to communicate with the spirits and have them do his bidding. Rotumans refer to this practice as *re atua* (doing spirits) and liken it to "devil worship," a practice that offends their Christian sensibilities.

According to some accounts, Gibson took his followers out into the bush for several days at a time. Just before they would emerge, he would take them to a cemetery and, as a final exercise in strength and

concentration, would have them lift a gravestone, while he would remove skulls and artifacts.

One of the reasons Gibson is so popular among his followers, I was told, is that he is a good storyteller. He allegedly tells a story about being in India amongst the Gurkhas. He says that Gurkhas control enormous spiritual power; that a man can talk to his knife, then throw it, and it will kill the person it is supposed to kill, even if that person is not present.

Such accounts of Gibson's behavior focus on his apparent obsession with potency, which most Rotumans see as being connected to his role as a karate master. Other stories, perpetuated by his followers, present evidence of his powers. He is able, they say, to make the cowrie shell necklace move by will and to make a *kava* bowl appear. One woman allegedly uses Gibson's picture as a central artifact in her healing ritual. Nonfollowers are skeptical, however, and some are outraged at what they see as blatantly anti-Christian actions and beliefs. No one, however, has accused him of attempting to force his beliefs on others, and most of his followers are still members of Christian denominations.

After the Coup: The Secessionist Movement

Following the first Fiji coup, in May 1987, an emergency session of the Council of Rotuma was called to discuss Rotuma's position. Members of the council resolved to pledge their support and remain part of Fiji. In early June, Gibson sent a letter to the council expressing his fears that the position of the Rotumans would deteriorate as a result of the coup, and on 11 June he addressed the council in person. He said that he would not abide by the council's ruling to remain with Fiji. He returned to New Zealand a few days later. In July, contrary to Gibson's pleas, the council sent representatives to attend the Great Council of Chiefs meeting to express Rotuma's desire to remain part of Fiji.

According to a deposition from the district officer, following the return of this delegation, meetings were held in each of Rotuma's seven districts to ascertain the views of the people. He asserted that "it was the overwhelming view of the majority of the Rotumans who attended these meetings, that Rotuma should remain part of Fiji even if Fiji were to become a Republic" (*Fiji Times*, 10 June 1988:41). In late July the desire of the people and the chiefs of Rotuma to remain part of Fiji was communicated to Governor-General Ganilau.

Following the second coup and the declaration of Fiji as a republic outside the British Commonwealth, in September 1987, the Council of

Rotuma again met and resolved that Rotuma would remain part of Fiji. The resolution was sent to the president of the new republic with a copy to the prime minister.

In October, from his home in New Zealand, Gibson declared Rotuma independent and wrote to Queen Elizabeth for recognition. He also sent an appeal to the secretary general of the United Nations. The letters were sent on stationery with his seal and large letters atop each page reading "GAGAJ SAU LAGFATMARO, KING OF THE ROYAL MOLMAHAO CLAN, ROTUMA."

In December 1987, on the anniversary of Gibson's installation as Lagfatmarō, his followers raised the British flag over the Mölmahao Cultural Centre. Incensed by this act of defiance, the district officer, a young Rotuman man, apparently went to the center and fired several shots at the flag. A few days later, a thirteen-man all-Rotuman military team was sent to Rotuma "to help control a sudden outbreak of extensive damage to food crop plantations by wild pigs," according to the Fiji Ministry of Information. The district officer was replaced by a retired military officer, also a Rotuman, who was charged with bringing the situation under control.

In April 1988 a number of Gibson's followers met and, with his blessings, selected a new set of leaders, one per district, who they asserted held authority in Rotuma. They sent a letter to the coup leader, Colonel Rabuka, to that effect.³¹ Shortly thereafter a Fiji police squad was sent to Rotuma to investigate reports of "alleged sedition" on the island. As a result, eight men were charged with sedition and sent to Suva for a brief incarceration before being returned to Rotuma.

In May a special sitting was held of the magistrate's court on Rotuma to hear charges. The defending lawyer, Tevita Fa, argued that the court did not have jurisdiction over the case since it had not been conclusively established that Rotuma was in fact part of the Republic of Fiji. The essence of Fa's argument was that in 1881 the Rotuman chiefs had ceded the island to Great Britain, not to Fiji, and that, when the Fiji Constitution was abrogated, all other laws, except the Deed of Cession, were rescinded; thus, with the Constitution and the Rotuma Act gone, the magistrate's court did not have any powers to hear the case (*Fiji Times*, 9 June 1988:8). The argument was sent to the High Court in Fiji, where the chief justice ruled that "Rotuma became part of Fiji by the most solemn act of faith and trust on the part of the Chiefs and the people" (*Fiji Times*, 10 June 1988:41), and that the magistrate's court did indeed have jurisdiction.

The case was heard in October 1988 but was recessed for a year until

October 1989, with the explicit hope that tempers would cool and that Rotumans would settle the matter among themselves. When that hope was not realized—the Mölmahao faction remained defiant in attitude, although they violated no laws in the interim—the trial was concluded and the defendants were found guilty of sedition. They were fined F\$30 (F\$20 less than the fine for riding a motorbike on the island without a helmet) and put on two years' probation. From New Zealand Gibson issued several pleas in the public media asking that he be guaranteed safe conduct to visit Fiji in order to attend the trial but was ultimately informed that he faced arrest if he returned (*Fiji Times*, 28 Nov. 1989:2). The sedition conviction was overturned by a higher court in 1991.

Conclusion

The question I wish to address in this conclusion is whether Henry Gibson might have had a realistic opportunity to mobilize Rotuman sentiment in support of his causes and failed. Is it possible, for example, that if he had behaved differently and used artistic resources more effectively, he could have rallied a majority of Rotumans to back a move toward independence? Could he have used the Cultural Centre as a springboard for crystalizing a sense of Rotuman identity that would become a political force?

It must be pointed out that Gibson enjoyed a great deal of goodwill and admiration from the people of Rotuma following his karate demonstration in 1981. Furthermore, his reputation as a well-intended, amiable individual has not been seriously tarnished by his subsequent actions. Many people on the island say that what he wants to do is not bad—they express at least passive agreement with his goals—but they admonish him for going about it in the wrong way. Others exonerate Gibson but blame his more zealous followers for going too far.

There is, in fact, a good deal of sympathy among Rotumans for the idea of a Rotuma independent of Fiji. Many individuals criticize the Fiji government for neglecting the island; they do not feel they have been well served since Fiji gained independence in 1970. Some yearn for a return to colonial status, with New Zealand administering the island (or more accurately, providing economic largesse).³² Remaining a part of the Commonwealth is important for a number of history-minded islanders who trace their ancestry back to the chiefs who ceded Rotuma to Great Britain last century. Many others I talked to were fence-sitting on the issue of independence, waiting to see what happened before tak-

ing a stand. At the very least, most Rotumans were prepared to consider the possibility of an independent Rotuma, or one that had a good deal more autonomy than at present. Yet Gibson has not been able to tap these sympathetic attitudes and mobilize them for political action.

Another factor that should have given Gibson leverage is that many Rotumans are dissatisfied with the chiefs and the ineffectiveness of the Council of Rotuma. Those who favor development complain that the chiefs talk a lot but get little done; they frequently refer to the alleged mismanagement of funds. Those who are concerned with preserving Rotuman heritage complain that the chiefs are not well versed in traditional customs and are neglecting their responsibilities for preserving traditions. Nearly everyone complains that the chiefs do not communicate effectively with the people. Many, if not most, Rotumans feel that there is a vacuum with regard to effective leadership. They are poised to accept someone who would take charge and get things done—someone who would get the roads fixed properly, repair the crumbling school buildings, and regularize transportation to and from the island. But Henry Gibson, even as Gagaj Sau Lagfatmarō, has not convinced them that he is the man to do it, despite his assurances that he would raise their standard of living.

If, instead of emphasizing symbols associated with his karate training, mostly derived from Eastern philosophy, Gibson had put more emphasis on items of Rotuman origin, would the people have responded differently? Perhaps, but one is hard-pressed to think of any symbols that would have special significance for the majority of Rotumans. Most of the traditional art forms have lost their cultural significance. Few people were impressed by the Cultural Centre. The artifacts contained within it—the shells, skulls, *kava* bowls, stone adzes, and baskets—hold no special symbolic significance. The Mölmahao flag, the logo of the hydra and shark, and the yin-yang plaque are all meaningless, even to his close followers, except insofar as they are identified with Gibson himself. Perhaps Gibson might have made better use of oratory or the medium of traditional dancing and singing to convey his messages. But it seems he failed more because of the manner in which he used symbolic and artistic forms than because of their appropriateness or inappropriateness.

Table 1 compares Gibson's use of art and symbols with the traditional forms described in the first section of this article and summarizes ways in which he adapted traditional arts and crafts to serve his own ends.

Most of the cultural artifacts used by Gibson and many of his actions can be construed as an attempt to enhance his own *mana*, or potency.

TABLE 1. Gibson's Use of Art and Symbols Compared with Traditional Rotuman Forms

Form	Traditional Usage	Gibson's Usage
Tattooing	exposed, probably as a symbol of humanity	hidden beneath a long-sleeved shirt
Ornaments	whales' teeth, pearl-shell breastplates and necklaces to designate rank	necklace of cowrie shells as symbol of <i>sau</i> and possessing supernatural power
Dress	wraps and girdles of fine mats worn by men of rank	white pants and shirt
Fine mats	used as ceremonial exchange items and as seats to symbolically elevate persons being honored	used as a seat for his own symbolic elevation
Oratory Chanting	storytelling, speechmaking before wars or wrestling matches, when chief is being carried from sea to shore or being buried	storytelling when Gibson arrives by plane
Singing and dancing	on special occasions, lyrics composed to depict events and honor individuals or places	no significant use of song or dance
<i>Kava</i> ceremony	public ceremony to honor chiefs and acknowledge rank ordering	private ceremony for Gibson to communicate with spirits
Flags	no known use prior to cession	used to communicate political messages
Logos and plaques	no known use	esoteric logo of shark and seven-headed hydra; yin-yang plaque on display in cultural center
Poetry	significant component of oral performances of chants and songs	written form, apparently dissociated from public performances
Tools and artifacts	pragmatic use only	used as symbols of Rotuma's past
Skulls	no known use	used to signify potency through connection with ancestors
Martial arts	no known forms other than war dances	karate demonstrations to demonstrate potency

His excursions to offshore islets and to cemeteries, his propitiation of pre-Christian spirits, his unearthing of skulls and grave goods, his revision of the *kava* ceremony, his construction of the shrine at Mölmahao and, not least, his assumption of the title Lagfatmarō all are oriented toward enhancing his own spiritual potency. To his followers, those already committed, such actions are evidence of quasi-godly status. But for most Rotumans they are anathema. Rather than mobilizing sentiment vis-à-vis the issues of Rotuman tradition, identity, and political autonomy, he made himself and his status the focal issue. Instead of playing the role of a true *sau*, someone who represents the whole polity selflessly, he ended up in the role of a parochial combatant. He thus lost whatever opportunity he might have had to become a stranger-king (Sahlins 1981b).

There are two fundamental aspects to chieftainship in Rotuma and in Polynesia generally: a kingly aspect and a populist aspect (Marcus 1989). The kingly side is based on divine sanction, on powers that flow from the spirits. From this standpoint a chief is a sacred being. Sanctity and the *mana* that goes with it are indexed by genealogical rank and successful ventures. The populist side is based on a conception of chiefs as exemplary persons and is indexed by proper social decorum. It generally includes notions of humility as well as social responsibility. In Rotuma, as I have pointed out elsewhere, the populist aspect of chieftainship dominates political conceptions (Howard 1985, 1986). But Gibson has chosen to ignore the populist aspects of chieftainship in favor of a quest for divine potency. Insofar as this has been the case he has been out of tune with Rotuman culture.

In his letter to me, Gibson included a poem he wrote that may well summarize his quest and his dissociation from the populist side of Rotuman politics:³³

On top the MOLMAHAO foundation I sat and drank my KAVA,
descending upon me – “THE MAN MAN NE A‘VA” [the spirit of
time past]

A beautiful moonlight night a visit from – “HANUA HA‘A”
[sacred land]
a procession of “NOBLES” with their – “UMEF KAVA” [*kava*
bowls].

Sat on the – “A-PEI-FISI” [fine white mat] and drank our “KAVA”
reawakening to us – “MAN MAN NE A‘VA” [the spirit of time past]

Lying on the – “A-PEI-FISI” [fine white mat] and listening to
 “FE’AG NE TEMAN FUA” [the words of the elders],
 clearly explaining to me – “ROAG ROAG NE O’UA HA-NUA” [the
 story of our island].

“ROTU(MA) HANISI” TAFa NE – “A’VA” —
 [faith and love; the light of the past]

“KO’ROA PU(MU)A, NE O’US HA-NUA”
 [most precious gift, from our island].

Above the Mölmahao foundation, where Gibson, as Lagfatmarō, would drink *kava* with his spiritual ancestors and receive their precious gifts, the American flag now flies. No one on Rotuma seems to know why—or much cares.

NOTES

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1. On Rotuma, housesites (*fūag rī*) are named and serve as a reference point for kin groups (*kāinaga*). Anyone who can trace their ancestry to an individual with rights in a given *fūag rī* has a legitimate claim to membership in the *kāinaga* associated with it. Even when no structures are present, *fūag rī* are referred to in English as “foundations” and their names identify cognatic descent groups.

2. The name Lagfatmarō does not appear on any of the lists of *sau* collected by European visitors to the island in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. The only place I have seen the name is in a list of *mua* provided by Henry Gibson’s great-grandmother Akanisi (the mother of his father’s father) to A. M. Hocart in 1913. The *mua*, like the *sau*, was a central figure in the pre-Christian ritual cycle but was not regarded as a “king” (see Howard 1986). Akanisi specifically told Hocart that a *mua* cannot become *sau* (Hocart n.d.:4703, 4771). I refer to Gibson by his given name in this article for consistency and convenience, not to express a view regarding the legitimacy of his title. That is for Rotumans to decide.

3. Whether Gibson purposefully uses *fa’apui*, a nonword, instead of *fapui* (a symbol that marks a place or object as forbidden to others) is an interesting question. As we shall see below, he seeks meaning by dissecting Rotuman words. The word *fa’a* by itself can mean

“to break off,” and hence metaphorically “to secede or rebel.” Perhaps he was inventing a new compound or committing a Freudian slip. With respect to the relationship between the flag and the *kava* ceremony prescribed by Gibson, see below.

4. Captain Edward Edwards of HMS *Pandora*, which came upon Rotuma on 8 August 1791, wrote that the Rotumans were “tattooed in a different manner from the natives of the other islands we had visited, having the figure of a fish, birds and a variety of other things marked upon their arms” (Thompson 1915:64–66). George Hamilton, who was also aboard the *Pandora*, wrote that “their bodies were curiously marked with the figures of men, dogs, fishes, and birds, upon every part of them; so that every man was a moving landscape” (ibid.: 138–139).

5. MacGregor also includes in his notes a drawing labeled “sceptre du roi, Rotuma,” on a card headed “Sau’s Spear. Rotuma. Mus. Mission, Rome.” He indicates that it is forty inches in total length with a sixteen-inch handle and is made of stained ironwood.

6. Whales’ teeth, still highly prized in Fiji, are not the valuable objects they were in the past. They are not ceremonially transacted between Rotumans, nor do they play any special role in Rotuman rituals. Some Rotumans have in their possession whales’ teeth (*tabua*), given by Fijians for special favors or service, but their symbolic significance for most Rotumans is minimal.

7. The *mua* was, like the *sau*, a ritual leader. In some accounts he is referred to as a “high priest.” For more details of Rotuma’s traditional political/ritual system, see Howard 1985.

8. According to Hocart (n.d.), women who were asked by a chief to make an *apei* were granted special license to act outrageously, as if they were possessed by a spirit who was beyond the rules of normal decorum.

9. In this respect, a gift of an *apei* is comparable to the Fijian presentation of a *tabua* (whale’s tooth), an equivalence explicitly recognized by Rotumans.

10. In Rotuma the “front” side is generally the side toward the sea, but under certain circumstances it may be on the east, or sunrise, side.

11. The word *manu’* (*manu’u*) has no known denotative meaning other than as an exclamation during the *kava* ceremony.

12. The content of the *fakpej* is described by Gardiner as telling a “story of the old times or whale fishing” (1898:424). MacGregor includes the texts of some *fakpej* in his field notes. They are stories about how *kava* came to Rotuma, which may have been the dominant theme of the chants in traditional times. The language of some *fakpej* is archaic, however, and not well understood by contemporary Rotumans, sometimes not even by the reciter.

13. When I visited Rotuma in 1960, the district officer, Fred Ieli, a Rotuman, was a stickler for authenticity. He had a reputation for getting upset when rituals were done “incorrectly” or in a casual manner. But no one in authority since has presumed to have his knowledge of Rotuman custom and desire to enforce it.

14. According to one of the most knowledgeable informants on Rotuma, sennit bindings were an art form in earlier times. Each place had its own unique way of tying sennit, which served as a signature of artisans from that area. I was told of one instance in which a man destroyed the binding of another because his area’s style had been copied without permission.

15. According to MacGregor's informants in 1932, *ape'aitu* were individuals to whom offerings were given when people wanted to know what the gods had to say. They therefore played the role of oracles (MacGregor n.d.).

16. The legitimacy of this title was disputed by one of the district chiefs during a sedition trial of some of the Mölmahao rebels, apparently because it was not properly bestowed in customary fashion. The man had previously held the title of Tivakaifag from the district of Juju but had a falling out with the chief there. He then took the title Kausakmua from the district of Noatau, but it was not sanctioned by the district chief there. Most Rotumans hold that subchief titles, if they are to be legitimate, must have the approval of the head chief in whose district they are located.

17. The genealogy was put on audio tape by Kausakmua and sent to the Council of Rotuma in order to validate Gibson's claim to the title. I have transcribed the tape and find some major breaks in continuity over the generations. Gibson sets the time of the original Lagfatmarō as twenty-five hundred years ago; as recited by Kausakmua fewer than twenty generations are accounted for. If one generously assigns thirty years per generation, under six hundred years are accounted for.

18. Rotumans generally use the English term "clan" as a translation of *kainaga*. It is an unfortunate translation, since it implies a corporate group of discrete membership. Rotumans reckon kinship bilaterally, and *kainaga* are best thought of as kindreds or cognatic descent groups, depending on context (Howard 1963).

19. Gibson seems to place considerable significance on the posture in which one enters the buildings he has constructed. The very name Mölmahao translates as "to climb up and bend down." Descriptions of traditional Rotuman houses often reported that low doorways, forcing a visitor to stoop over when entering, were characteristic. Some commentators have interpreted this feature as a form of hurricane resistance, since the entire roof usually came down low. Another possibility is that having a low entranceway forces a visitor to pay homage by assuming a deferential position. I assume the significance attributed by Gibson is based on the latter interpretation.

20. There was only one exception. During the time I was on Rotuma in 1960, the district chief of Noatau held the title of Fakraufon.

21. See Howard 1990 for an account of the dispute surrounding the selection of a successor.

22. There is nothing unusual about titles being given to persons whose residence is elsewhere; the main criterion for eligibility is simply that one can trace one's genealogy back to an ancestor who had lived on the foundation with which the title was associated.

23. The latter claim is based on a Rotuman legend concerning the conquest of Rotuma by Ma'afu (see Churchward 1937:255-260).

24. According to one informant, some of Gibson's followers, in response to his vision, dug up the Mölmahao gravesite and found eight women buried about twelve feet down; two feet below that was a man buried in a sitting position, with a cowrie shell necklace around his neck. It was Rotuman custom, according to this informant, to bury *sau* with eight women attendants. There is no evidence in the literature to corroborate this claim, nor is there any evidence to suggest that cowrie necklaces were worn by *sau*. Many Rotumans

expressed doubts to me about the antiquity of the necklace. They said that the sennit cord that strings the cowries together looks new and suspect the necklace to be a modern artifact. The antiquity of the necklace is less important for the purposes of this article than the skepticism it reflects regarding the symbolic significance of the artifact to most Rotumans.

25. *Kokona* were designed to keep rats away from food. A round wooden shelf was delicately balanced above a net container so that, when a rat stepped on it, the shelf tipped, dropping the rodent to the floor. One of my informants commented derogatorily that the *kokona* had been made with nails rather than the traditional sennit.

26. See Gibson's account of his vision above; he specifically reports that the house in which he encountered the spirits had eight posts. It has been pointed out to me by Vili Hereniko that the significance of the number eight may stem from the fact that Rotumans recognize eight sides to their *kainaga*, corresponding to each of their great-grandparents.

27. In this section I am reporting what various informants have said took place. I am less interested here in what occurred than I am in what people believe occurred and their perceptions of events.

28. By custom individuals are ordinarily given a *mamasa* only on their first return visit to the island. The word *mamasa*, in ordinary usage, means "dry" or "to dry." The notion behind the ceremony is that the person has been wet (and beyond culture) at sea and is made dry (and domesticated) on return to land. In traditional times the ceremony was performed when people returned from a sea voyage or a major fishing expedition (Churchward 1940:258).

29. According to most reports, Gibson always dresses in white on Rotuma and always wears long-sleeved shirts. His entire upper body is tattooed, I was told, but he assiduously keeps covered up while in public. As one of my informants pointed out, his way of dressing is distinctly European rather than Rotuman and visually contradicts his verbal commitment to restore the traditional culture. The contrast, for example, with the current district officer, who dresses in a tailored lavalava with a sennit belt, is dramatic. The latter dress communicates to Rotumans a respectfulness that joins the wearer to the community. Gibson's attire distinguishes him from the community.

30. Gibson is married to a white New Zealand woman, but she does not accompany him on his visits to Rotuma. He apparently has a cult following in New Zealand, based on his role as a karate grand master. According to two informants who have visited his home in Auckland, his followers there (mostly white New Zealanders) treat him with extraordinary deference. He reportedly has little to do with the Rotuman community in Auckland.

31. There is some confusion over the status of these newly selected leaders. In the press they were called "new chiefs," but when confronted the dissidents insisted that rather than replacing the old chiefs, they were "ministers" of a newly formed cabinet (that would presumably govern Rotuma following independence).

32. New Zealand earned a special place in Rotuman eyes as a result of massive relief efforts following Hurricane Bebe in 1973. By building an extraordinary number of hurricane-proof houses in a very brief period, the New Zealand military took on legendary status (see Rensel 1991). They later provided aid and labor for installing toilet facilities.

33. The poem was typed in a combination of English and Rotuman, with Rotuman words capitalized. My translation of the Rotuman appears in brackets. As with all poetry, it is difficult to give a precise translation since some of the language is metaphoric and lends itself to alternate interpretations. The fact that Gibson writes Rotuman in an unorthodox manner further complicates the task. I have checked my interpretation with Rotuman colleagues and they agree that the translation presented captures the basic spirit of the poem.

POLITICIZATION OF LA CULTURE MA'OHĪ: THE CREATION OF A TAHITIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Today, the peoples of the Pacific are using their arts and culture to re-educate themselves about their ancient traditions and historical past. They are creating histories and traditions in their attempts to consolidate political and cultural identities. In so doing, they are destroying self-effacing stereotypes, promoting self-esteem, and creating national identities. Ironically, many of these endeavors have been assisted by the colonizing governments who originally instigated the demise of these cultural traditions.¹

Even though broad similarities exist among many cultures of the Pacific, each group or island culture has a history unique unto itself. In the contemporary Pacific the institutionalization of culture (for example, the creation of museums, festivals, and art schools) and the cultural identities these institutions have created have led scholars to treat *kas-tom*, *Hawaiiana*, *Maoritanga*, *fa'a-Samoa*, and the Ma'ohi culture movement under the same rubric—the creation or modification of traditions for political purposes.² These political and cultural movements are seen in terms of the assertion of Pacific identity and the demand for a political voice. However, the relationships these groups have had, historically, with their colonial governments demonstrate the cultural and political diversity of Pacific peoples.

Integral to these cultural traditions are the many roles of the arts. Art, always an essential aspect of the cultural traditions of Pacific peoples, has allowed for the visual and verbal interpretation of cultural, religious, and political practices. The arts are, therefore, not simply decorative or an embellishment but an integral element in the political

essence of Pacific identity. For example, the verbal arts (oration, the recitation of genealogies, the passing down of histories and mythologies) have always held political importance, as they were essential to the maintenance of political power. Today, Pacific peoples are heralding language and the verbal arts as something of cultural value and contemporary importance that also allows for the consolidation of modern political identities.

The Maori, for example, believe in their descent from seven tribes, each representing a canoe in the Great Fleet that migrated to New Zealand from central Polynesia. This mythical belief has recently been called into question by scholars who believe that it was an invented tradition created by late nineteenth-century scholars (Hanson 1989). Even though this myth may have been created by Western scholars, it is an integral element in Maoritanga (the Maori culture; literally, "of the Maori people") and as such serves the Maori as a tool of political and cultural identity. The Maori example illustrates that culture, tradition, and identity are fast becoming the tools by which Pacific peoples are proclaiming both their uniqueness and their independence.

In Tahiti and throughout French Polynesia, the creation of *la culture ma'ohi* has been a long time in coming.³ Diverse influences "created" the Tahitian postcontact culture and are the basis for *la culture ma'ohi*. First, the relationship Tahiti had with other islands in central Polynesia allowed for the exchange and development of artistic and religious traditions. It is believed that there was frequent interaction between Tahiti, the Marquesas, the Austral and the Cook islands before European contact. Evidence for this includes artifacts from these island groups found in Tahiti (Rose 1979; Stevenson 1988). Second, European contact with Tahiti was made by the British in 1768, and the London Missionary Society began its evangelical work in 1797. Finally, by the mid-nineteenth century Tahiti was incorporated into the French colonial empire, and the Catholic church was firmly established as an alternative to Protestantism. The Tahitians modified and reinterpreted their culture in reaction to the several influences that were introduced by outsiders and seized upon by indigenous politicians of the day. The interplay between these three political and religious ideologies allowed for a give and take that enabled the Tahitians to adhere to the cultural and artistic traditions they valued. By the end of the nineteenth century, French rule replaced the Tahitian monarchy and Christianity had overcome the indigenous religious system. However, the Tahitian language and many cultural and artistic traditions remained an integral part of Tahitian society (Stevenson 1990b).

Currently, however, the arts and cultural traditions of Tahiti are being institutionalized as the result of a perceived need to reeducate and enculturate the Tahitian populace, arising from fluctuations in cultural values in the twentieth century in response to the importation of the modern world. Politicians suggest that this approach is actually an economic and not a cultural policy. Yet, Tahiti is undergoing a renaissance of its cultural heritage. The result has been the creation of *la culture ma'ohi*.

La Culture Ma'ohi

The Tahitian word *ma'ohi*, signifying an indigene of the Society Islands, was first used politically after World War II.⁴ In 1945 Tahiti was granted universal suffrage, and in 1953 the Territorial Assembly was organized, giving the Society Islands a political voice in both Tahiti and France (Tagupa 1976:6). At this time the terms *ma'ohi* and *ta'ata Tahiti* were used to distinguish between the indigene and the colonialist living in Tahiti. In 1958 *ma'ohi* became associated with Pouvana'a, who led a nationalist party seeking independence from France.⁵ The movement was squelched when Pouvana'a was exiled and incarcerated in the Prison des Baumettes, France, for eight years (Robineau 1987:18). However, his movement and its demise provided the impetus for change. As Tagupa explains, "The Pouvana'a movement was an intense effort to restore the Polynesian identity of the islands community, where alien groups and institutions held the essential reins of political, educational, and economic power" (1976:12).

Today the term *ma'ohi* remains politically charged, but its meaning has become more complex. Raapoto used the term in distinct contrast to "Tahitian" whose "denomination has an essentially demagogic, touristic, snobbish and rubbish vocation. 'Tahitian' is the *pareu* shirt whose material is printed in Lyon or in Japan; it's the Marquesan *tiki* called Tahitian as well as the *tapa* of Tonga, Uvea, or Samoa sold in Papeete. . . . Tahiti is an exotic product made by the Western World for the consumption of their fellow countrymen" (1980:3). *Ma'ohi* refers rather to that which is indigenous. It is a community of shared traditions, language, culture, and ideology whose duty it is "to understand, to become impregnated with our past, our culture, our language, to create a new world in our image and in our dimension" (Raapoto 1980:5).

This contemporary identity has become a political identity as well, with Tahiti's changing political status under the statutes of 1977 and 1984.⁶ With the granting of internal autonomy, Tahitian cultural tradi-

tions have been consolidated into *la culture ma'ohi*, the Ma'ohi culture movement. Key to this cultural identity is the ability of Tahitians to govern their own affairs and determine their future. Jacques Teheiura, Tahiti's minister of culture from 1981 to 1987, stated that "culture is the future" (1989:107), and intimated that the stimulation of traditional culture is a governmental obligation (1989:110). The use of a cultural identity to create a responsibility to the past is also seen in Melanesia. Keesing stated, "*kastom* everywhere represents a commitment to pride, as counter to colonial racism and scorn for native ways, a commitment to ancestors and their rules, a commitment to communal solidarity rather than individualism, to lands and villages rather than money and progress" (1982:371).

Contemporary Ma'ohi identity is quite different from that envisioned by Pouvana'a. Until the Pouvana'a movement there was little cause for the Tahitians to question their identity. Tahitians and Demis (people who are half Tahitian, half European) alike were covetous of American and European material possessions, and a good education seemed necessary for advancement in colonial Tahitian society. These goals did not appear contradictory to being Tahitian. Tahitian arts and cultural traditions as well as the Tahitian language were maintained. However, the 1960s saw a tremendous influx of French political and economic authority, which challenged the cultural values of the Tahitians. The creation of a contemporary Ma'ohi identity is not only a new manifestation of a cultural heritage integral to Tahitian society, but a manifestation of an identity in contradistinction to the French.

The Institutionalization of the Arts

The goals that Raapoto outlined in 1980 determined the need to reeducate, destroy stereotypes, and promote a Tahitian identity. Marco Tevane, as minister of culture from 1970 to 1976, felt that these goals could best be achieved by the institutionalization and reinterpretation of traditions (pers. com., Nov. 1989). This process, inspired by but not contingent upon Pouvana'a's nationalistic movement, was first manifested in the reconstruction of Marae Arahurahu in 1954. In a project organized by the Société des Études Océaniques and financially assisted by the South Pacific Commission, the *marae* (religious enclosure) was reconstructed and embellished to demonstrate the majesty of such traditional monuments. An underlying assumption of this project was that there would be tourist interest in such a historical monument.

An interesting aside to the reconstruction of Marae Arahurahu and

the "magnificent folk procession" that inaugurated it (Garanger 1969:29) were the local interpretations regarding the *marae*. The Tahitian populace showed a marked disinterest and lack of knowledge about the *marae* or folkloric manifestation. However, many were aghast at the appropriation of a religious monument as a tourist attraction. Missionary doctrine equating such festivities to ancient pagan practices created an aura of disapproval within the church. The colonialists and Demis, who watched the event with excitement, associated those involved in the inaugural festivities with the independence movement.

Marco Tevane, a participant in the inaugural ceremony as well as the annual presentations that followed, claimed that the goal of these activities was to present a venue for the Ma'ohi to discover or rediscover their culture (pers. com., Nov. 1989). This is not to suggest that the Tahitian culture had been destroyed. However, those traditions associated with ancient religious practices, especially practices associated with the *ari'i* (chiefs), had been disregarded when Christianity and a new government replaced the traditional political and religious systems. Important *marae* were abandoned in the early nineteenth century, and priests as well as their assistants who were in charge of the *marae* grounds, paraphernalia, and practices no longer found their power and prestige to be associated with a *marae* or its knowledge. As a result, information about these activities was not passed to the next generation. The lost ceremonial knowledge included the preparation of regalia, the construction of objects, the composition of chants, the choreography of the ceremonies, and what is now believed to be about twenty thousand words in the Tahitian language (Louis Savoie, pers. com., Jan. 1990).

Another cultural change that took place in the 1950s involved Tahitian dance. Always an integral aspect of Tahitian culture (Moulin 1979; Stevenson 1990a, 1990b), the dance underwent a codification in an attempt to create a standard base on which creativity could be encouraged. Dance groups had competed annually for fifty years in the festival known today as the *heiva*. The respectability of dance was heightened by the standardization of the art form through the creation of a semiprofessional dance troupe by Madeleine Moua. Competitions now took place between semiprofessional groups rather than between groups organized by the district or the church. Aspirations to membership in these dance troupes (and to their prestige, international travel, and income) strengthened the quality of the performances and inspired the imaginations of choreographers, costume designers, and musicians.

The importance of these early activities (involving *marae* and dance)

lies in the foundation they supplied both for the reinterpretation of cultural traditions and for the creation of a cultural identity—*la culture ma'ohi*. The most recognized venue for the perpetuation of these traditions is the annual *heiva*. An institution in and of itself, the *heiva* has celebrated the cultural heritage of the Tahitian people since 1881. This festival has always had a political function in its demonstration and perpetuation of Tahitian cultural traditions. During the past century, however, traditions have been modified and reinterpreted to assert a uniquely Tahitian identity. The Tahitians used the events in the *heiva* to reinforce their identity in contradistinction to the French, countering periods of increased French intervention with greater participation in the *heiva*. Thus the *heiva* itself has aided in the creation of this identity (Stevenson 1990b).

The mid-1960s saw the true beginnings of Tahiti's institutionalization of culture. The economic backing for the cultural changes came from the French government. However, the content of these programs was in direct opposition to a tremendous influx of French military personnel, Western goods, and increased tourism (Stevenson 1990b). In 1965 Marco Tevane founded the Club Ma'ohi. This association was organized to aid in the creation and reinterpretation of traditional values. An offshoot of the club was the creation of the title Tane Tahiti, which venerated such Tahitian values as strength, agility, ability in subsistence activities (fishing, paddling, copra preparation), and proficiency in the Tahitian language. Also in 1965, the Musée Gauguin was inaugurated as Tahiti's first museum. At this time the development of culture emphasized a European framework. However, in 1966 the government bought land for an ethnographic museum focusing on Tahiti and Polynesia, and in 1967 l'Académie Tahitienne was created. Although this academy was placed within a French scholarly framework, its goal was to study and standardize the Tahitian language. The academy was followed by the Maison des Jeunes and the Maison de la Culture, whose goals were to develop the arts and French cultural values.

In contrast to the 1960s, the 1970s saw the creation of institutions whose roles were to perpetuate the cultural heritage of Tahiti. The first implementation of a new cultural policy was a result of legislation in 1971. In 1975 the Tahitian Academy changed its name to Te Fare Vana'a. This change in name reflected the French acceptance of Tahitian as a national language. It also symbolized the academy's struggle to have Tahitian taught in the school system. As such the use of Tahitian became associated with Tahiti's new move toward internal government. Te Fare Vana'a, whose role was to study and standardize a language,

now placed its emphasis on recording myths and genealogies, teaching the art of oratory, and creating texts from which Tahitian would be taught.

Although the Tahitians did not lose their language to colonial administrators, it was only after years of struggle that Tahitian became part of the French curriculum in the mid-1970s. As a result, Tahitian children today are learning about their language, the significance of their cultural traditions, and the majesty of their past as well as the role these have in contemporary traditions. As Henri Bouvier has stated, "*Une langue . . . établit un solide pont entre leur passé et leur avenir*" (Saura 1986:66).⁷

The cultural initiative continued, and the importance of the traditional arts was recognized in the establishment of the Musée de Tahiti et des Îles in 1977. The basis of its collection was the archaeological artifacts collected by the Société des Études Océaniques, an academic society based in Pape'ete since 1917, coupled with the collections of the Catholic and Protestant churches. In 1980 the museum was expanded and renamed the Centre Polynésien des Sciences Humaines (Te Ana Vaha Rau). The museum was now a department of the center, which also included a department of archaeology and a department of oral traditions.⁸

The year 1980 also saw the establishment of OTAC—Office Territoriale d'Action Culturelle (Te Fare Tauhiti Nui). OTAC incorporated the former Maison des Jeunes and the Maison de la Culture. Whereas their mandate was to develop the culture of Tahiti, OTAC's greatest role in this creation of culture comes from the department of Fêtes et Manifestations, which is responsible for the organization and implementation of the *heiva* and all other cultural activities. Also within OTAC are research and development, and educational programming departments; a library; and a theater.

The arts of Tahiti are undergoing a renaissance owing to the financial and organizational support given by OTAC. *Artisans* (artist co-ops) are encouraging competitive exhibitions of their arts (*tifaifai*—appliqué, plaiting, carving). "Traditional tattoo" has been reintroduced to Tahiti, productions of Tahitian literature are being presented, and large manifestations of "cultural traditions" are produced in the forms of *marae* reenactments⁹ and the *umu-ti*, or firewalk.

This artistic renaissance was also aided by the formation of the Centre Métier d'Arts in 1981. This art center teaches the technical skills and aesthetic sensibilities required by an artist. A three-year program leads to a territorial diploma. The center offers an alternative to the French

school system and at the same time instills a knowledge of and respect for Tahitian cultural traditions.

The implementation of cultural policy is also seen on television and heard on the radio. The nightly news is programed in both Tahitian and French, and Tahitian radio stations abound. The institutionalization of culture has been so thorough that it is difficult to avoid some sort of encounter with Tahitian culture on any given day.

A more thorough and widespread knowledge of the value of traditional Tahitian activities has resulted from the institutionalization of Tahitian culture. As such, a "shared cultural heritage" has been created in Tahiti. Instead of being Tahitian in a French society, the Tahitians are now choosing what they value from both cultures. As in other areas of the Pacific, the creation of institutions has become a political tool to develop ethnic pride and cultural understanding. As Linnekin stated: "A shared cultural heritage is a basic ingredient in both objective and subjective definitions of ethnicity. . . . In nationalistic movements, tradition becomes a rallying cry and a political symbol. Cultural revivalists search for an authentic heritage as the basis for ethnic distinctions; as they rediscover a culture they also create it" (1983:241).

The Role of the Arts in *la Culture Ma'ohi*

The early explorers of Tahiti were not only intrigued but also mystified by its arts. Their journals are filled with long passages describing dance and ceremonies at the *marae*; and there was frequent mention of tattoo (an operation many sailors underwent), *tapa* cloth, and the extraordinary costumes of mourners and warriors. These initial observations were firmly implanted in the European mind and remain the foundation of Tahiti's international reputation.

Dance has undergone tremendous innovation and change over the past two hundred years. However, the creativity necessary for contemporary dance competitions is often inspired by descriptions recorded by the early explorers. One such is the description of Tahitian dance by Joseph Banks, a member of Cook's *Endeavour* voyage:

In the course of our walk we met a set of strolling dancers Called by the Indians Heiva who detained us 2 hours and during all that time entertained us highly indeed. They consisted of 3 drums, 2 women dancers, and 6 men . . . keeping excellent time to the drums which beat brisk and loud; they soon began to shake their hips giving the folds of cloth that lay upon them a

very quick motion which was continued during the whole dance they sometimes standing, sometimes sitting and sometimes resting on their knees and elbows and generally moving their fingers with a quickness scarce to be imagined. The chief entertainment of the spectators seemed however to arise from the lascivious motions they often made. (Beaglehole 1963:325)

The British were enthralled not only by the dance, but also by the costumes. William Wales recorded one such description:

The dress of the performers is extraordinary and grand on these occasions. It consists of a great quantity of thick cloth of different colors bound very tight round the waist with cords, and disposed so as to stand off sideways from the hips in a vast number of plaits or folds to the extent of a fine lady's petticoat when in full dress. To this is attached a parcel of coats below, and a sort of waist coat without sleeves above. Round the head is wound a great quantity of plaited hair in such a manner as [to] stand up like a coronet, and this is stuck full of small flowers of various colors. (1772-1774, 1)

Dancers, their costumes, and their choreographed performances highlight the annual *heiva* competitions. Creativity and innovation are strongly rewarded. Thus this mainstay of Tahiti's cultural and artistic heritage is strengthened by the constant reinterpretation and modification of a tradition. The changes seen in the dance are best exemplified in dance costuming. Once clothed in *tapa* and human hair, today dancers are bedecked in plant fibers (hibiscus, coconut, pandanus) and flowers. In their attempts to be both authentic and innovative, costume designers have used the descriptions and drawings from the early explorer voyages in the creation of contemporary costumes (Figure 1).

Innovation, especially in costuming, is also seen in other *heiva* spectacles, especially the *marae* reenactments and the *umu-ti*. In these events costume design is representative of the contemporary modification of past costume traditions. Using bits and pieces of various traditional costumes (for example, by combining the mourners' and dance costumes), new designs are created and posited as authentic (Figure 2). In the late 1970s and early 1980s the most extraordinary and flamboyant costumes were well received. These included headdresses (inspired by the warrior's headdress or *fau*) that critics associated with Las Vegas or a Folies Bergères review. The contemporary aesthetic leans toward simplicity so



FIGURE 1. A dancer at a *marae* reenactment in July 1989 wearing a cloth costume with feather tassel and breast ornament. (Photo by Karen Stevenson)



FIGURE 2. A flamboyant headdress worn by a dancer from the group "Maeva" at a *heiva* in 1989. (Photo by Karen Stevenson)

that a simple fabric (representing *tapa*) or a skirt of leaves is now seen as more credible (see Figure 1).

The need for innovation and the creation of tradition began in the 1950s owing to a lack of knowledge about Tahitian culture. In 1954, at the time of the first *marae* reenactment, little was known about *marae* ceremonies. Drawing from scholarly works, especially Teuira Henry (1928), a historic reenactment was created. The theme, the investiture of an *ari'i*, was chosen because of the documentation available on that ceremony. Costumes were designed by gathering information from photographs together with drawings and descriptions from early explorer voyages. Musical accompaniments to chants and dances were composed for the occasion. Not knowing how these chants should sound or what dances might have been appropriate, those involved attempted to recreate a traditional ceremony (Marco Tevane, pers. com., July 1989; see also Jacquier 1954). As there is no feasible way of knowing how authentic these recreations might be, one must look at these reenactments as only an interpretation of the traditional past.

Another cultural reenactment, first introduced into the *heiva* in 1957, is the *umu-ti* (Figure 3). This event now plays a large role in *la culture ma'ohi* as it reinterprets a religious ceremony once held under the auspices of the ancient priesthood of Ra'iatea. As Ra'iatea was one of the last islands to receive Europeans, it is believed that its ceremony survived missionization.¹⁰ The function, traditionally, was to ask the gods for help in times of scarcity. Today the performers have no link to the line of priests who had performed the ceremony, and most of their information regarding it comes from Henry (1928). It has become a mystifying phenomenon, suggesting that with the aid of the gods one can walk across burning rocks. The intervention of the gods is key in the re-creation of a mystical aura associated with the gods and the invocation of a celebrated past.

Raymond Graffe, the self-proclaimed high priest of fire, believes that missionization has destroyed Tahitian culture, and only a respect and knowledge of the traditional gods will enable Ma'ohi culture to continue (pers. com., Nov. 1989). The reinstatement of the gods as purveyors of knowledge, protectors, and beneficent beings is, therefore, important to the Ma'ohi cause. The glorification of traditions destroys the pagan stereotype and demonstrates the complex society of the ancient Tahitians.

Even though the Tahitians are Christians, many have not abandoned indigenous ideologies. As Teiwaki comments about the Maori, "After 120 years there is little doubt that Christianity has become an integral



FIGURE 3. Dancers clothed in *ti* leaves perform for the *umu-ti*, 1989.
(Photo by Karen Stevenson)

part of our present way of life, but it is surprising how persistent many of the old beliefs and superstitions have been" (1980:7). The cultural reenactment of the *umu-ti* (performed for large crowds) has empowered the populace with a relationship with their traditional gods. The result is a contemporary notion of ancient Tahiti as something to emulate and be proud of.

This pride is most often seen in the commitment to Ma'ohi culture. The most visible manifestation is the renaissance of tattoo. Traditional tattoo was reintroduced to Tahiti in 1982 by Tavana, an entrepreneur

from Hawai'i.¹¹ With the help of Tavana, Teve, a young Tahitian dancer, was tattooed by Samoan tattoo artist Lesa Li'o. Teve, with his full body tattoo, became a role model for those interested in this traditional art form (Figure 4). Here again the notion of a modified tradition serving contemporary purposes comes to the fore, as this ancient art form had disappeared in the late nineteenth century. The motifs introduced by Tavana are a compilation of Marquesan, Samoan, Tahitian, and artistic imagery. The initial reintroduction took place under the auspices of OTAC during the 1982 *heiva*, thereby officially sanctioning the event and giving the demonstration an air of authenticity.

Prior to the early 1980s tattoo was, for the most part, associated with youth gangs and those involved in the independence movement (Tea Hirshon, pers. com., July 1989). Today, tattoo has become an accepted symbol of Ma'ohi culture. To many it is decorative and "fashionable"; to some it is a lasting mark demonstrating their commitment to Tahitian cultural identity (Stevenson 1990a, 1990b). The majority of those tattooed are young adults, many of whom are also involved in dance or outrigger canoe racing. Their involvement in *la culture ma'ohi* is marked by their tattoo and further demonstrated in their participation in events integral to Tahitian society (Figure 5).

Also of importance in Ma'ohi identity are athletic endeavors such as outrigger canoe racing, the javelin throw, or the fruit carriers race, as well as subsistence activities (such as copra preparation and *niau*, or coconut frond plaiting) and art production (for example, *tifai fai*).¹² Canoe racing has been a part of the *heiva* since its beginnings and has always been an integral part of Tahitian existence. Outrigger canoe racing is now an international sporting event that brings status and prestige to Tahiti. The importance of the outrigger is symbolized in its incorporation in one of Tahiti's flags.

The production of items for sale, including arts and crafts, reinforces a Ma'ohi identity as it reiterates, on a day-to-day basis, Tahiti's cultural traditions. The plaiting of *niau* for housing materials reflects traditional architectural styles, and the use of plaited baskets and hats recalls an ancient lifestyle. *Tifai fai*, introduced by missionary wives, incorporated the floral motifs of Tahitian *tapa*; the form persists today (Figure 6). Hammond states, "Although *tifai fai* originated as a result of Polynesian contact with the Western world in relatively recent times, the art form is now an integral part of Polynesian cultural tradition" (1986b:53).

The importance of these art forms in the creation of a Ma'ohi identity lies in their reinforcement of the value of Tahiti's artistic and cultural heritage. The development of the arts strengthens this identity vis-à-vis



FIGURE 4. Teve performing as a member of the Tahitian delegation to the Festival of Pacific Arts, Townsville, Australia, 1988. (Photo by Karen Stevenson)



FIGURE 5. A “traditional” tattoo on a dancer at a *marae* reenactment, July 1989. (Photo by Karen Stevenson)

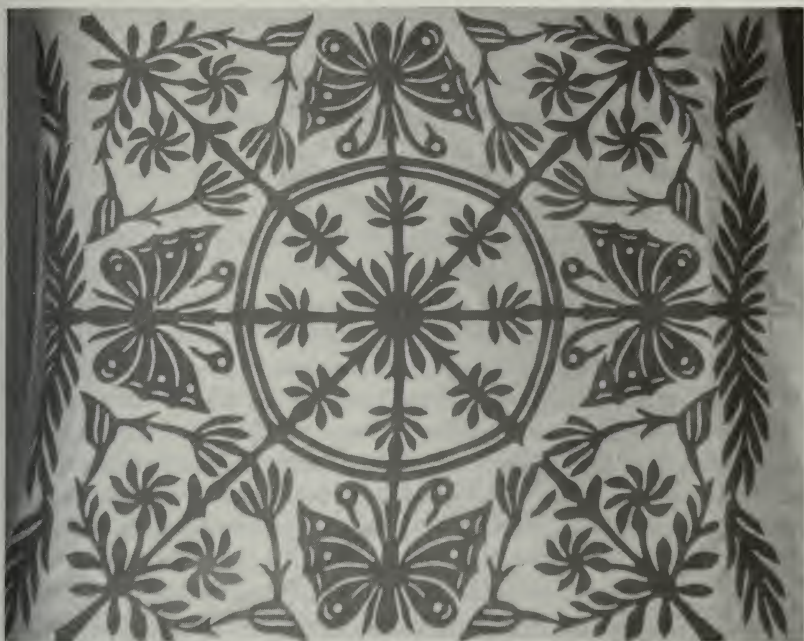


FIGURE 6. Top: A *tifaifai* dating to 1910, owned by Eric Teri'i Nui o Tahiti Pommier. Bottom: Papaya theme seen in a contemporary *tifaifai* detail, Village des Artisans, Tipaerui, 1990. (Photos by Karen Stevenson)

both the colonial presence of the French and the modernization of Tahitian society. The result is a national identity—a Tahitian identity.

The Politicization of Culture

"Since Custom legitimates political unity and identity, what people accept as true custom becomes the subject of political dispute" (Lindstrom 1982:318). Lindstrom's statement is easily applied to Tahiti's creation of a cultural and political identity. Within the past twenty-five years, what is and is not Tahitian, what is authentic, and what is left of Ma'ohi cultural heritage has been the focus of much debate. Marco Tevane fought for the institutionalization of Tahitian culture against many who asked why (pers. com., Nov. 1989). In the context of other Pacific nations, the answer reflects the need to create a future unique to themselves and separate from the colonial governments under whose reign many traditions were lost (Linnekin 1990).

The Ma'ohi identity in Tahiti, however, is being used to alter the perception of identity and cultural values. The institutionalization of culture was necessary to educate and enculturate the *ma'ohi* population. The politics of culture in Tahiti lies in the government support of artistic and cultural activities, not in an overt attempt to manipulate this identity as a political tool. As such the Ma'ohi identity cannot be compared to the Hawaiian or Maori causes. In Hawai'i, cultural and political identities have become intertwined (Linnekin 1990). Hawaiians use this cultural-political identity to fight political battles concerning land rights, sovereignty, and even the definition of what or who is Hawaiian. The Maori are also using their identity to assert their cultural and political unity, and to gain for it the recognition of the New Zealand government (Hanson 1989:894).

In contrast to these very political usages of cultural identity, Tahitian politicians are using their artistic heritage to heighten the awareness of a cultural past and to create a cultural identity for a Tahitian future. Even though the Ma'ohi identity seems to be gaining momentum, there is little said in the current political rhetoric about the arts. Louis Savoie, the former minister of finance, suggested that funding for the arts is seen as a socioeconomic policy that perpetuates artistic traditions, not a cultural policy (pers. com., Jan. 1990).

Oscar Temanū, the mayor of Fa'a'a, does, however, use the Ma'ohi identity to promote his platform of independence. This use of the Ma'ohi identity is most obviously seen in the recent construction of his new mayor's office. Designed in traditional *ma'ohi* style, it is a complex

of single-story, rectangular-shaped buildings with rounded ends. Roofs are made of *niau*, walls of bamboo are supported by an infrastructure of carved beams, and the interior is papered with *tapa*. Generic tiki images abound, as does a sense of community and accessibility. Temanu uses this complex as a metaphor for Tahiti's living cultural traditions. The complex also embodies Temanu's commitment to Tahitian culture and identity, which is seen as the underlying impetus for independence and a political symbol distinguishing Temanu's political platform from that of Jean Juventin, the mayor of Pape'ete (Marco Tevane, pers. com., Nov. 1989). Pape'ete's mayor's office, inaugurated in May 1990, takes the form of the old palace—in Temanu's eyes, an obvious symbol of colonialism.

Temanu's efforts suggest that Tahiti's cultural identity might become as politicized as Hawaiiiana or Maoritanga. However, the creation of identities and the reinterpretation of traditions are currently seen as only one aspect of the social and economic development of Tahiti. The institutionalization of the arts has instilled in the Ma'ohi a knowledge of and pride in their cultural heritage, created tourist revenues, and reinterpreted and perpetuated cultural traditions that might have become extinct. The identity created—*la culture ma'ohi*—will allow the Tahitians to create their future in terms of their past.

NOTES

1. These efforts are encouraged with the economic assistance given by colonizing governments. It is rare that a struggling nation of the Pacific can support its arts and culture without this aid.

2. A short list of the contributions to this discussion includes Hanson 1989, Keesing 1989, Keesing and Tonkinson 1982, Lindstrom 1982, Linnekin 1983, Linnekin and Poyer 1990, Lucas 1989, Raapoto 1980, Robineau 1987, Stevenson 1990b, and Tonkinson 1982.

3. *Ma'ohi* is a term used throughout French Polynesia (the Society, Marquesa, Austral, Tuamotu, and Gambier islands) to denote an indigene of these islands. At the time of European contact, the ruling chiefs of Tahiti either controlled or maintained economic relations with many of the islands that would become French Polynesia. Today, Tahiti is the capital of both the Society Islands and French Polynesia and is therefore often used as a generic term denoting all the islands and their peoples. In this article I use the terms *Tahiti* and *Tahitians* to distinguish the people and arts of the Society Islands with specific emphasis on the island of Tahiti.

4. "*Ma'ohi*" is a Polynesian word used by various culture groups. It is spelled differently throughout Polynesia dependent on the language spoken. Thus "*ma'ohi*" and "Maori" are in fact the same word.

5. For further information on Pouvana'a, see Danielsson and Danielsson 1974; Tagupa 1976.

6. In 1977 the French government granted administrative autonomy. Although the decree had little effect legally, it paved the way for further reforms and was seen by Tahitian autonomists as a major step. In 1984 internal autonomy was granted, giving the Tahitian government jurisdiction over all local affairs, public services, and the budget.

7. This can be translated as: "A language establishes a solid bridge between their past and their future."

8. The department of archaeology has recently undertaken a survey of all of French Polynesia and currently is directing a multinational excavation of a site in the Pape'eno'o Valley.

9. "*Marae* reenactment" is my term for the cultural productions/dramas that are seen annually in Tahiti. These presentations are based on a historical reinterpretation of cultural events that might have taken place at a *marae* prior to the nineteenth century.

10. Descriptions of this ceremony can be found in Henry 1928. See Stevenson (1990a, 1990b) for a discussion of its evolution from an ancient practice to a contemporary manifestation.

11. Tavana is known for his dance spectacle that was housed in Honolulu's Moana Hotel. Long interested in tattoo, he was tattooed by Samoan artists, who also taught him the craft. Traditional Polynesian tattoo was done by hand with a bone-toothed instrument and a mallet. The dye is created from a mixture of candlenut soot and water.

12. The art of plaiting is seen both in the subsistence activity of creating building materials (roofing, flooring, walls) and in crafts (such as the making of purses, hats, and mats).

WOMEN, ART, AND THE CRAFTING OF ETHNICITY IN CONTEMPORARY FRENCH POLYNESIA

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Tradition is a highly charged arena of political debate in French Polynesia. Both pro-French and pro-independence forces appeal to notions of Polynesian tradition in their claims to represent the Polynesian ethnic majority. The two sides in this political debate have adopted different definitions of what constitutes authentic Polynesian tradition. The independence movement has sponsored the re-creation of precolonial arts and customs: voyaging canoes, thatched houses, tattoo, even Polynesian religion. This movement is led by urban intellectuals and artists. For many nationalists the only authentic traditional customs are those that existed before European conquest. Their revival of indigenous customs is known as the Ma'ohi culture movement and is described by Stevenson elsewhere in this volume.

The pro-French side in this political contest embraces the evolved tradition of the mission and colonial periods, which is the tradition familiar to most working-class and rural islanders.¹ This tradition is epitomized by an idealized picture of rural Polynesian culture: it is devoutly Christian; centered on the home, the garden, and the sea; and emphasizes values of modesty, generosity, and hospitality. Its arts are local appropriations of imported materials: cloth *pareu*, piecework *tifaifai* bedcovers, elaborately plaited hats, Christian *himene* songs. These arts are locally known as *artisanat traditionnel*. Women artists in this tradition organize cooperative associations, whose activities will be discussed in detail below.

Just as local Polynesians accepted imported materials and trans-

formed them into distinctive art forms, they also accepted many Asian and European immigrants and absorbed them into island society. This Polynesian tradition judges ethnicity by behavior, values, and contributions to the local community, not on biological inheritance (see Levy 1973:215; Linnekin and Poyer 1990: introduction, 8; Jones 1991:14–15).² This accommodating tradition seems an obvious instrument for those politicians who advocate continuing ties to France and expanding foreign investment.

The focus of this article is the role of women artists in the *artisanat traditionnel* cooperative movement and on the Territorial political stage. The basic argument is that politicians, on the one hand, use their power as patrons of craft cooperatives to compel women artists to promote their political aims. Displays and performances created by these women artists serve to craft the politician's image as a traditional, legitimate, ethnically Polynesian leader loyal to the interests of the working-class, Polynesian majority. On the other hand, leaders of cooperative organizations use the political system to gain access to markets, resources, and power for women artists.

This article starts with a description of the craft cooperative movement and then analyzes the patron-client relationship between local politicians and craft cooperatives. Next, it details how politicians use women artists and *artisanat traditionnel* as symbols of Polynesian ethnic identity and of legitimate authority. I conclude with a discussion of the threat that political and commercial arrangements pose to the traditional prestige of women artists in their local communities.

Associations Artisanales

Artisanat traditionnel includes those crafts that have been continuously practiced over the past several centuries by Polynesian women and men. Genres widely considered *artisanat traditionnel* include all types of plant (and artificial) fiber plaiting, weaving, shredding, and tying; wood and stone carving; the making of jewelry and ornaments from shells, seeds, feathers, and fresh flowers; as well as sewing and decorating cloth pillows, bedspreads, other household furnishings, and certain types of clothing. Male artists perform virtually all the carving of wood, stone, or shell and some plant fiber work, and tend to work out of private workshops, rarely joining cooperatives. The craft cooperative (*association artisanale*) movement represents mainly the interests of women artists. Women artists work in cloth, plant fiber, shell, feathers, and fresh flowers.

The organization of women artists into cooperatives provides an important opportunity to earn cash, particularly in rural areas. In one suburban district I studied, only 43 percent of all adult women hold wage employment (ITSTAT 1984, 23:2). The other 56 percent are housewives. Because most Polynesian women (71 percent) stop school at age fifteen, after the legally required primary stage, employed women usually hold low-paying service jobs as cooks, maids, or child-care providers (see also Fages 1971:162). They may also participate in cash cropping of garden vegetables or tree fruit, but this work is difficult, of low status, and requires access to increasingly scarce garden land; furthermore, profits must be shared with the landowners. On Mo'orea, Taha'a, and Rurutu, I met women who grew vanilla, coffee, or flowers to earn a little cash (see Lockwood 1988 on women and cash cropping on Tubuai).

Women join craft cooperatives for access to a market for homemade crafts, for income that they alone control, and because they have a say in the management of the organization. This measure of independence from their families and from the predations of merchant middlemen and market resellers is an important factor in women's decisions to join cooperatives (see also Finney 1965:23-24; Hammond 1986a:266; Lockwood 1988:273; and Jones 1991:34-36).

Local Associations

Local associations, of which there are hundreds in French Polynesia, are the basic unit of *artisanat* organization. With growing territorial government support for cultural programs in the late 1970s and early 1980s, women organized themselves into cooperative associations, or *associations artisanales* (Lockwood 1983:54-55; Stevenson, this volume).³ The purpose of these organizations is the commercial production, promotion, and marketing of traditional crafts. Each district or village contains at least one craft association, and typically several, primarily representing women artists and the full range of traditional materials.⁴ The association commonly has a building or "center" for meetings, work space, and exhibition of items for sale. In contrast to the groups of churchwomen or kinswomen who meet to work together (*pupu*) in traditional communities, these new associations are highly structured, organized into larger groups, directly involved in politics, and concerned primarily with making money. Members enjoy socializing and often work side by side on individual projects, offering each other help and advice, but labor exchange is rarely practiced in craft

associations. Associations range in size from a dozen members in isolated Tuamotu island communities, to more than forty members in some Austral and Society islands communes (Service de l'Artisanat Traditionnel 1987:2).

The larger craft cooperatives are typically housed in neotraditional-style buildings that are oval, with a pandanus thatch roof, cement walls and floor, and sliding glass doors. A small garden frames the cooperative building. If the district boasts a tourist attraction, the building is placed next to it. The interior of a typical craft cooperative building (*fare artisanat*) is filled with finished items for sale. Low tables line the walls holding pillows, bedcovers, clothing, and shellwork. Other tables may display the work of local men; there may be wood objects such as tikis and ukeles, or carved mother-of-pearl. The walls are hung with *tifai fai* and fancy piecework pillowcases. In the center of the oval room, there are mats laid flat on the floor with woven bags and baskets arranged on them, rolled mats, and treelike stands blooming with hats. There are three or four racks of long shell *hei* necklaces and hand-painted *pareu* skirts and dresses.

A small group of women usually sits inside, keeping shop, gossiping, and quietly sewing or plaiting. Other members come and go, dropping off finished crafts or food for a special event, picking up raw materials, or checking to see if they have sold anything. Once a month, at a general meeting, members who fail to meet their obligations (in the form of dues, turns minding the store, or contributions of labor and food to collective events) are scolded, plans for upcoming events and exhibitions are discussed, and the latest news from the government offices in charge of tourism and development are mulled over. In many villages, the craft cooperative building is as important a local meeting place as the mayor's office and the general store.

Federations

The relationship between politicians and women in the craft movement extends beyond the local level, through federations of cooperatives. At the intermediate level, local cooperatives join larger federations. In 1987 there were six federations in French Polynesia: four based on Tahiti and one each in the Tuamotus and the Marquesas. They represented over four hundred associations with more than thirty-seven hundred members, according to the Service de l'Artisanat Traditionnel (Tila Mazière, pers. com., 1988).⁵ One of the larger federations, Pu Maohi F.A.A.T.I. (Fédération des Associations d'Artisans de Tahiti et

des Îles), had more than forty associations and over one thousand artists in 1987, according to its founder, Caroline Solari (pers. com., 1987). Another federation, the Comité Territoriale des Associations Artisanales et Culturels Maohi, led by Stella Lehartel, included fifty member associations and more than three thousand artists in 1985 and has increased in size since that time (Lehartel 1985:3).

Federations usually have member associations on several islands.⁶ Their role is to coordinate the movement of people and goods between communities. Associations in rural communities ship raw materials such as rolls of pandanus or bamboo, shells, or feathers to the urban or suburban associations. In return, the urban groups market finished craft items for associations in more isolated areas. The federation also serves as a go-between, arranging for the urban cooperatives on Tahiti to purchase and ship imported materials such as fabric, dyes, or sewing machine parts for their counterparts on remote islands.

When a group of artists visits another island for an exposition or other special event, the women are the guests of the local association belonging to the same federation. Women from outer islands teach Tahitian women techniques forgotten in Tahiti, and Tahitian women in turn share the latest innovations in technique or materials from Tahiti. This relationship, based on cooperation, sharing, and exchange of information, contrasts strongly with the competitive relationship between federations. Federations compete for choice exhibition spaces in Pape'ete, for leadership positions on government advisory committees, for invitations to represent the Territory on overseas tours and tourist brochures, and for government grants.

Because there are several federations with overlapping territories, there is also competition between federations to attract member associations. In the organizing meetings I attended, artists appraised which federation president was more effective in organizing and promoting events such as large exhibitions for member associations and which federations best facilitated material and personnel transfer between islands. Occasionally, someone raises the issue of which federation president is a more accomplished artist and thus better equipped to understand artists' problems and to direct youth training programs.

While federations serve to promote development in the craft sector, they also serve political interests. Artists told me privately that political patrons pressure local cooperatives to participate in federations primarily to support their political alliances and ambitions on a territorial level. In fact, local associations often have no choice but to join the federation that their local patron politician favors. Federations, as groups

of cooperatives, are linked to groups of allied politicians in the major political parties.

The half dozen or so women who lead large associations and federations are powerful figures in the island political scene. On the one hand, politicians recognize their power to organize people, plan events, and marshal goods and labor, and they seek to enlist the support of these prominent women artists. On the other hand, there is a constant jockeying on the part of these craft movement leaders for favors controlled by political leaders and their appointees: limited aid grants, prime exhibition space in the capital, and opportunities to represent the Territory in tourism campaigns and on foreign promotional tours (to the Pacific Arts Festival, for example). All of these women are well connected in the complex political and civil-service hierarchy. They use their resources and connections to secure advantages for their associations and hope that they are not outmaneuvered by a rival (in those cases where a politician promises something a more powerful colleague may have offered to another federation, as often happens in the huge, complex territorial bureaucracy).⁷

Government Institutions

The highest level of government concerned with development in the craft sector is a cabinet minister in the territorial government whose responsibilities include *artisanat traditionnel*. This is a relatively new responsibility and for many years followed its key supporter, Georges Kelly, as he changed portfolios: in 1985 he had the Ministère de la Jeunesse, des Sports, de l'Éducation Populaire et de l'Artisanat Traditionnel; in 1988, the Ministère de l'Agriculture, de la Culture et de l'Artisanat Traditionnel; in 1989, Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Artisanat Traditionnel; and in 1990, the Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Artisanat Traditionnel et du Patrimoine Culturel. Kelly was also vice-president of the Territory's government from 1988 to 1991 and held a post in the Territorial Assembly. With the return of Gaston Flosse's Tahoera'a Huira'atira party to power in 1991, *artisanat traditionnel* came under the control of Justin Arapari and the reconstructed Ministère de la Culture, de l'Artisanat Traditionnel et des Postes et Télécommunications.

Government activities in this area are channeled through the Service de l'Artisanat Traditionnel, administered since its creation in 1987 by Tila Mazière, whose charge is to encourage the development of crafts.⁸ The Service organizes large expositions and contests, arranges for expo-

sitions and sales contracts overseas, and disburses small grants for travel and helps with purchases of equipment such as sewing machines. The Service also sponsors conferences for artists and association leaders to voice their concerns to government representatives and conducts survey research on obstacles to development in the craft sector. Other offices in the complex territorial bureaucracy support traditional arts; most important are the Office Territorial de l'Action Culturel (OTAC) and the Tourist Promotion Board (its local acronym is OPATTI, Office de la Promotion et d'Animation Touristique de Tahiti et ses Îles). Many other offices, for example those concerned with education and activities for young people, sponsor art education and expositions.

To summarize the important features of the *artisanat traditionnel* movement, home- and family-based traditional artists have emerged into the public, commercial, and political arenas. The women's craft cooperative movement has had a large impact on working-class Polynesian women, with hundreds of active cooperatives, several major annual exhibitions, foreign tours, and a new public role in cultural policy making. Both Polynesian women and local politicians are taking advantage of the opportunities offered by this new form of organization.

The Politics of Patronage

There are a dozen political parties in French Polynesia. Most center on a single charismatic leader and focus on electing him or her to the important office of mayor or representative to the Territorial Assembly. The primary locus of political activity is the commune mayor's office. (Mayors are the elected leaders of communes, of which there are forty-eight in French Polynesia, generally comprising a single village and the surrounding district, although in sparsely populated areas districts may be combined to form communes.) Only the three or four larger parties launch territory-wide campaigns and are allied with major metropolitan French political parties. Because, in the French system, a single individual can hold as many offices as he or she can win election to, it is often the case that a mayor is also a representative to the Territorial Assembly. The result is a remarkable concentration of power in a handful of politicians who hold several offices simultaneously: a mayor's office, a seat in the assembly, and perhaps a cabinet post or seat in the French or European parliament. As it is not physically possible to be in two or three offices simultaneously, day-to-day operations are left in the hands of a small army of *adjoints*.

Political life in Pape'ete, French Polynesia's only city, is more complicated than village politics. We will examine the role of the politician as patron of the arts and manipulator of traditional symbols beginning in the village. In rural districts, the commune mayor's office is the center of political power. The mayor is usually the most important patron an artist or group of artists can have. Most communes contain one or two craft associations. The mayor's office usually offers major support to only one association, by building a shop and meeting place for a cooperative (*fare artisanat*), which is constructed on public land alongside the main road or as part of a local tourist landmark. The mayor's office pays the telephone and electrical bills, and sends someone to cut the grass in the garden. With the mayor's help, the association also maintains a small stand in the Pape'ete marketplace. The mayor frequently addresses the quarterly association meetings and may hold an honorary office in the association.

In larger, more populous communes, the mayor may give assistance to several smaller cooperatives, in the form of small loans or grants and occasional help from public employees with heavy labor, in addition to the major patronage of one larger association. Smaller groups rarely persist in the face of the competitive advantages that official sponsorship provides: a well-maintained, permanent home in a highly visible location and opportunities to be in the public eye at official events.⁹ Thus, craft cooperatives have strong incentives to seek and maintain the favor of the mayor, their most important patron.

Through their support of craft associations, mayors promote jobs and income for local citizens and foster district pride in the many competitive exhibitions that take place in the capital. The mayor forms a political alliance with the craft association. In return for his or her support, the mayor expects the support of the association and, ideally, the allegiance of its members.¹⁰ The artists decorate public buildings for ceremonies and festivals, perform as singers and dancers for visiting dignitaries, and host fund-raising lunches, dinners, and dances for the mayor's political party. During election campaigns they hand out buttons and flyers, put up posters, and help get out the vote. These duties take up a lot of time, particularly for the president of the craft association, who in some cases spends more time on politics than on making or promoting art.

So why would one do it? What compels craft associations to enter into relationships with politicians that many artists consider exploitative? Basically, it is the competitive advantage over other local artists, resulting from increased exposure and access to resources. Secondarily, some

members of an association may support a politician out of genuine conviction and loyalty to the political philosophy he or she espouses. Many artists also believe in the importance of community service and point to youth training programs in the arts sponsored by the mayor as a worthy cause to support.

Beyond these motivations that lead artists to join politically active associations, artists also stress the camaraderie of membership in the association and their enjoyment of social activities.¹¹ The opportunity to participate in the public performance of tradition and politics is important in small rural communities. Craft associations offer Polynesian women positions of leadership and social prominence, the possibility of getting their pictures in the newspaper, and an arena in which to advance the prestige of their families. And to some extent, craft associations may provide support to their local mayor because the right to labor and gifts is traditionally the prerogative of leadership in Polynesian society.

Mayors have considerable power to assist their loyal supporters, usually by offering to send commune employees and equipment to help businesses, churches, and private individuals with difficult jobs. They find jobs for the relatives of their supporters, and conversely, their supporters hire employees sent to them by the mayor. Craft associations benefit from mayoral support, and some members feel they owe their loyalty in return. The favors that a mayor expects in return for patronage vary depending on the age and ambition of the mayor, the proximity of an election, and the size of the commune. Businesses and organizations that do not support the mayor find that the new sidewalk is on the other side of the road and the new drainage ditch runs across their parking lot.

Political activities are specifically forbidden under the official organizing charter for artisanal organizations, partly to prevent discrimination on the basis of political or religious affiliation against individuals wishing to join cooperatives (*Service de l'Artisanat Traditionnel* n.d.). Still, it is not unusual for a craft association, or any other business or organization for that matter, to engage in political activities. Business people in Tahiti must offer support by making cash contributions, giving promises of votes, and putting up campaign posters, for example, to maintain good relationships with the mayors of their communes. The consensus in the artistic community is that a mayor should be able to demand occasional services from client craft cooperatives, preferably in community activities that are not purely political in nature, such as school fairs or training programs for unemployed young people.

However, when a mayor uses his or her power over a cooperative to demand performances, goods, and services for purely political events such as campaign fund raisers, party rallies, and private parties for political allies, conflict within the craft cooperative can erupt. Conflict over political activities may even lead the cooperative to split into two separate associations. The problem may be simply that working for a patron interferes with earnings from craft production, or it may reflect a deeper dissatisfaction with the political leadership of the commune and of the cooperative. In some cases, a new association is formed and receives some support from a rival political party. If this rival party is successful in defeating the incumbent mayor at election time, the splinter association usually takes over the commune *fare artisanat* as a reward for its efforts during the campaign. The power of incumbency should not be underestimated, however; forming a splinter association is a risky strategy for dissatisfied, ambitious artists to pursue.

When a local politician fails to win reelection, his or her client craft cooperatives must seek the favor of the successful rival. Although the association may survive, there is nearly always a change in leadership at the association as well. At the district level, a newly elected mayor engineers the replacement of an association president who campaigned for his or her rival. Replacement with a loyal supporter is harder to effect at the federation level, where leaders are too powerful to be upset by the results of a single election.

The Crafting of Ethnicity

Women artists are important to politicians because these artists can create for a leader an image of legitimate authority based on identification with the local Polynesian working-class majority. The political power of women artists is based in part on their social importance as elders in their communities. Women artists are collectively referred to as *mama* or *mama ru'au* in the Tahitian language. Local people refer to most middle-aged and older Polynesian women as *Mama*, both as a term of reference and in direct address. As a term of address, it expresses respect, affection, and familiarity. To call a woman *Mama* also implies the attainment of maturity, responsibility, and respectability in her community.¹² *Mama ru'au* translates literally as "old woman" or "grandmother," but it is also used to honor women wise in the ways of tradition, oral history, and craft (Langevin-Duval n.d.:26-27).

Women artists are a source of collective Polynesian pride in creativity, resourcefulness, entrepreneurship, knowledge, and skill. They provide

a positive image of Polynesian womanhood that contrasts with the image of the tourist brochure beauty who is forever young, overtly sexual, and easily exploited. For Polynesian women, the growing prominence of famous women artists creates a space—the artists' associations and federations—in which women can act independently of male relatives publicly and politically.

Politicians gain respectability from the public support of the socially prominent women of their district. These women artists are considered to be exemplars of traditional Polynesian family values—honesty, generosity, hospitality, nurturance, and piety—values that politicians gladly associate themselves with.

To win the votes of the Polynesian majority (over 70 percent of the population), a politician must appear to be of Polynesian ethnicity. Many politicians come rather from the class of highly educated, relatively wealthy, part-European *Demis*, who are widely resented by working-class Polynesians.¹³ For Polynesians, however, ethnicity is more a matter of life-style than of ancestry (see Levy 1973:215; Jones 1991:12–14; for Pacific Islanders in general, see Linnekin and Poyer 1990:8). Politicians' public support of local *mamas* and their craft cooperatives and the public performances of these women for their patrons produce an image of shared fictive kinship and Polynesian ethnicity. Politicians who successfully make this identification with the Polynesian majority are popularly referred to as *metua*, which translates to “parent” (see Danielsson 1986:25). The presence of a crowd of loyal *mamas* with their accompanying Polynesian music, dance, costumes, and traditional hospitality is a powerful symbol of belonging to the people.

Politicians also use other traditional symbols and behaviors to reinforce this public ethnic image. Fluency in the Tahitian language and oratorical style is practically a prerequisite for office. Politicians are likely to adopt the more casual clothing style of the islands (*pareu* shirt and trousers for men, flowered dresses for women) rather than the formal European suit. Such behaviors become meaningful when people doubt an individual politician's honesty and loyalty to his or her constituents. Traditional symbols assert, “I am like you, I share your values, I am looking out for community interests (not my own or those of any foreign power), I am accessible to you.”

Island politicians have to balance the desire to appear cosmopolitan and sophisticated alongside military officers, civil servants, and business people with the need to appear to be ordinary Polynesians to their constituents. In recent years, charges of corruption and misuse of power have resulted in boycotts, blockades, strikes, and even riots in Pape'ete.

In the current climate of political instability and economic crisis, the wearing of elegant European suits and rumors of too frequent presence at fancy cocktail parties, rather than at church in one's home district, are dangerous threats to established politicians. In this situation, the traditional symbols assume a heightened importance. It is not easy to maintain traditional values and support economic development at the same time, as women artists have also discovered. The failure of politicians to meet this challenge convincingly accounts, in part, for the cynicism with which many Polynesians regard the business of politics.

The Power of Tradition

The political geography of French Polynesia has changed little since the contact period. Modern communes are divided along the borders of ancient chiefdoms. The position of chief was only gradually transformed into the modern elected office it is today, passing through periods in which chiefs were nominated by the queen and confirmed by an election of sorts or simply appointed by French colonial administrators (see Newbury 1980:186–216). Somewhere along the line chiefs lost their ancient titles as *ari'i* or *ra'atira* and were simply called *tavana*, a Polynesian transformation of the English word "governor."

The ancient chiefdom and the modern organization of communes with popularly elected mayors have only a few things in common, the most important being deliberate attempts by modern politicians to call on the authority of tradition.¹⁴ Modern politicians subtly invoke symbols and qualities of traditional chiefdom to reinforce their authority and to imply that they are the sole legitimate candidates for a local office. During campaigns for election to the territorial government, mayors travel to other districts and outer islands soliciting votes. On arrival in a distant village or island, they may be received with gifts of *tifaifai* piecework bedcovers (wrapped around them as barkcloth once would have been; see Hammond 1986b:55) and handwoven hats, and smothered in flower necklaces (see also Lockwood 1983:54). These images of decorated political figures are, of course, transmitted throughout French Polynesia through television news and the two newspapers, and are noted by the population of their home district.

The welcome that a politician receives far from home is a direct measure of his or her political power and personal charisma. High-ranking chiefs in the past also went on tours of the island or neighboring islands to test alliances and loyalty. Gifts, feasts, and entertainment were symbols of alliance, loyalty, friendship, and power then as now. Photogenic displays of allegiance and affection are arranged through networks of

women's craft cooperatives (federations) and alliances of powerful Tahitian politicians and less influential politicians from outer islands.

Politicians use traditional *artisanat*, as they construct their identities as ethnic Polynesians, to further their claims to traditional sources and uses of power. The power to convene labor groups to produce prestige goods, such as fine mats or barkcloth, was a prerogative of chiefdom in the precolonial social order. The manifest ability to marshal labor from loyal supporters is still an indication of political power in Tahiti. The size and appearance of a politician's entourage, which is greatly improved by the addition of a score of traditional artists, is also an important sign of political health.

Island politicians symbolize their similarity to traditional chiefs by drawing these subtle parallels without comparing themselves explicitly to traditional chiefs or calling for a return to the system of hereditary title holding. The revival of contact-period chiefdoms is not a popular idea in modern French Polynesia, nor has the restoration of the monarchy been proposed, even by members of the Ma'ohi movement. Appeals to traditional authority, designed to impress a working-class Polynesian electorate, use symbols and practices associated with chiefdom with great caution.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the use of chiefly devices such as the grand tour, with ceremonial greetings and presentation of gifts, the sponsorship of festivals and feasts, and the convening of local labor on communal projects entails subtle but powerful evocations of chiefly authority.

The building of grand public meeting places is another traditional symbolization of chiefly prerogative and power employed by modern politicians. Powerful political leaders have led a movement away from the modern pan-Pacific concrete construction of public buildings that characterized the building boom of the sixties and seventies, in favor of the revival of traditional architectures. The mayor of Pape'ete, Jean Juventin, built a replica of the nineteenth-century Pomare Palace to house his offices in the late 1980s. Independence leader and mayor of Fa'a'a Oscar Temaru countered this edifice with a huge complex of traditional thatched oval buildings in the style of Tahitian meetinghouses of centuries past. These two leaders are appealing to the two competing concepts of Polynesian tradition and identity discussed at the outset of this article. Identification with both of these traditions lends an air of legitimate authority to a leader, albeit with different audiences.

Politics and Prestige: A Dilemma for Women Artists

The involvement of craft associations in political activities is controversial in Tahiti. Many Polynesian women consider political activities

worldly, corrupting, and the domain of men. Respectable Christian mothers and grandmothers are not expected to act in this arena (see also Langevin-Duval n.d.:30). Many Polynesians, especially devout Christians, refuse to participate in politics and do not vote. Many civil servants refuse to join political parties because they fear losing their posts during a change of government. Alienation, cynicism, and apathy on the part of the Polynesian majority and election boycotts organized by the independence movement also discredit conventional political activities.

For those who disapprove of the commercialization of traditional crafts, the political entanglements of craft movement leaders are a further reason for the condemnation of the movement. The commercial, competitive, individualistic values that are necessary for success in business and politics are in direct conflict with the traditional values of generosity, egalitarianism, and modesty that *mamas* are supposed to embody. This contradiction leads to criticism from Polynesians outside of the movement and can endanger women artists' prestige in their local communities (see Jones 1991:77–79; also Debra Kirch's 1984 study of Tongan craft sellers). Within the women's craft movement, some artists complain that political activities drain energy and resources away from economic and artistic development. These women view political activities as the expropriation of their movement by male politicians for their own ends, which have little in common with women's agendas for social and economic change in Tahiti or for individual economic advancement.

From another perspective, the alliance between politicians and women artists is inevitable and not necessarily bad for the women involved. It is widely recognized that craft associations need political support in the form of grants, subsidies, financial advice, and facilities to compete with imported products and to export local crafts. Although some politicians exploit their dependent clients, there is a limit beyond which the women involved switch their political allegiance to other leaders (Jones 1991:67–70). Because politicians want craft association assistance in staging public events, impressing visitors, and getting out the vote, women leaders gain access to the network of power long dominated by men.

The attitude that women should not involve themselves in politics is largely a result of European ideas about women imposed during the colonial period (Lockwood 1988:269). In traditional Polynesian society, women exercised secular authority in many instances. As women gain access to political power in metropolitan France, women are beginning

to be elected and appointed to offices in French-dominated Tahiti. Women organized into cooperative associations have more opportunities to effect political change than they have had through other rural institutions, such as traditionally neutral church organizations.

Conclusion: Tradition, Ethnicity, and Culture Change

The women's art movement in contemporary French Polynesia has its roots in a continuous tradition of women's communal work groups and a continuous historical evolution of traditional art genres. However, the movement has been criticized for breaking out of established modes of production for traditional arts by entering the modern marketplace, introducing competition, and involving artists in political affairs. The older forms of private, family-based production and consumption as well as production for making gifts or for charitable purposes persist in most communities. However, the introduction of market values into a realm traditionally characterized by generosity, hospitality, and modesty has been a major change in Polynesian society. This transformation of tradition has created social conflict and sometimes threatens the prestige of women artists in their local communities.

A second major change has been the adoption of the women's art movement by local politicians eager to assert and reinforce their images as men and women of the people. The presence of women artists and their dramatic visual and performance arts at political events is a powerful symbol of traditional authority and Polynesian ethnic identity.

The women's crafts movement and the Ma'ohi revival movement are beginning to come together in spite of political, generational, and religious differences. Independence leaders sponsor craft cooperatives in their home districts and employ many of the same symbols that conservative politicians use to assert their identification with the Polynesian majority. For example, all island politicians wear flowered *pareu* shirts while campaigning and all are decked with flower *hei* or *tifaifai* when they make stops on the grand tours of other friendly districts. Pro-French political parties also support the revitalization of indigenous language and culture (see Stevenson, this volume). Folkloric dance groups, often associated with the Ma'ohi movement, are working together with more conservative artists to revive ancient costume styles and materials, including barkcloth, featherwork, and tattoo. Polynesian artists and performers in both these movements share the Ma'ohi language and in many cases are members of the same families.¹⁶ So if the ideological contrast between two groups of artists making compet-

ing claims to authenticity and authority may seem dramatic, in fact it is much more complicated. The future status of these traditions is part of the ongoing debate over the future direction of Polynesian society.

This is a time of great change, challenge, and conflict in French Polynesia. The artistic renaissance and the growing interest in local history are important steps in strengthening island culture and building a basis for self-reliance. In spite of the risks associated with commercialization, Polynesian artists have reached new levels of public recognition and acknowledgment. The contemporary arts of French Polynesia are integrated fully into island political and cultural life as emblems of ethnic identity and traditional values, creativity, and resilience in the face of change.

NOTES

I conducted fifteen months of research in French Polynesia on three trips between 1985 and 1989, focusing primarily on the women's craft cooperative movement. My research was funded in part by the Center for Research in International Studies at Stanford University. In Tahiti, I enjoyed the considerable assistance of the Musée de Tahiti et des Îles, the Centre Polynésien des Sciences Humaines, and the Service de l'Artisanat Traditionnel. I worked with several cooperatives and many artists, whose privacy I respect. The opinions stated in this article, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

The phenomena of the Ma'ohi revival and the women's craft cooperatives occur throughout the five archipelagoes of French Polynesia. The generalizations suggested here are based on observations made in urban Pape'ete and in rural communities on Tahiti and several outer islands. The distinction between the urban culture of the northwestern coast of Tahiti and the rural culture of the outer districts and islands is one of the key constructions in local discourses on tradition and ethnicity. Urban and rural Polynesian society are closer than ever before, owing to improved communications and transportation. So while there are important differences between districts, islands, and archipelagoes, there is truly a sense of national identity—some call it Ma'ohi, others Polynesian or Tahitian—among the residents of French Polynesia. It is these shared experiences that I choose to illuminate in this article.

1. One of my Tahitian friends explained to me that she was Tahitian first, but she would always also be French. Many Polynesians feel pride in their French citizenship. They may have been educated in France, served in the French military, or received their paychecks from the French administration. Several other islanders expressed to me the desire to be connected to the wider world through France and the fear that independence would bring isolation. Thus far, the appeals of loyalty and opportunity in continuing association with France have outweighed the arguments of Ma'ohi nationalism.

2. There is a considerable literature describing the complexities of ethnic categorization in French Polynesia (for example, Kay 1975; Robineau 1975; Levy 1973; Newbury 1980; Oliver 1981; Panoff 1989; Jones 1991). The Ma'ohi versus Polynesian or Tahitian distinction does not define two discrete groups, but is a politically charged distinction in French

Polynesia (see, for example, Raapoto 1988; Temaru 1988). The term "Ma'ohi" is used by all Tahitian speakers to refer to native Polynesians, regardless of political affiliation. "Tahitian" is used to refer to native Polynesians of Tahiti and nearby islands, but it is also applied to persons of mixed ethnic heritage who choose to live in the Polynesian style. The term "Tahitian" is rejected by some members of the Ma'ohi movement. I choose to use "Polynesian" as an unmarked term for islanders of native ancestry or life-style.

3. The first such craft cooperative may have been founded in Pueu in 1967 (Ringon 1971:37).

4. The membership in *associations artisanales* is overwhelmingly female. Male artists tend to work out of private workshops (*ateliers*) adjacent to their homes. Typically, these workshops support only one craftsman, although more prominent artists sometimes take apprentices or hire younger men (usually relatives) to assist with large orders. A few men participate in the cooperative movement, but there are rarely more than one or two in a single association. Many associations have no male membership.

5. In an earlier report the Service de l'Artisanat Traditionnel documented the rapid increase in the number of associations, an increase of 75 percent (from 175 to 306 associations) in only one year, 1985–1986 (1987:2).

6. Island groups continue to specialize in craft production, particularly in raw materials. The Tuamotus are a famous source of shells of all types, including the black pearl oyster (*Pinctada margaritifera*); most of the pandanus used in making mats, baskets, and hats is produced in the Austral Islands; the Marquesas have many active wood carvers and produce some barkcloth (see Service de l'Artisanat 1987; Jones 1991).

7. Many artists complained that the Service de l'Artisanat Traditionnel favored a particular federation. To complicate matters, the minister in charge of the Service, Georges Kelly, supported a rival women's craft federation leader. Jean Juventin, mayor of Pape'ete and successor to Tila Mazière's brother's position as president of the Territorial Assembly, supported yet another powerful federation.

8. Madame Mazière is the sister of a prominent Tahitian politician, Jacques Teuira, who was president of the Territorial Assembly (and also mayor of the commune of Arue and president of various labor organizations) when she was appointed *chef de Service* in 1987. Many local people suspected that she gained her post through the favor of her powerful brother. Madame Mazière rigorously defended her qualifications for office in personal conversations and in the press. Although I heard much gossip about her political intrigues, in her dealings with me, Madame Mazière was unfailingly helpful and generous.

9. Despite the proliferation of cooperatives in the 1980s, only a few appear to be able to thrive over long periods of time, probably those with official sponsors. Data from one of the Austral Islands, supplied by the Service de l'Artisanat, suggest a pattern in which groups of artists split from a large cooperative to found a new group, which is active for a year or so and then dissolves. A few small, family-based cooperatives persist over time, surviving on word-of-mouth commissions and selling through market resellers in Pape'ete.

10. Robineau sums up the dynamic of this relationship: "Thus the chief is caught up in a prestige dynamics that he must master if he wants to maintain his status. In other words, between the people and their chief, there is a dialectic of reciprocity in which the chief provides services—material in the form of subsistence or money, moral owing to the district's renown—and the people provide their allegiance" (1988:189).

11. Many women artists choose not to join cooperatives and work at home alone or with close friends and relatives. Some gave disapproval of political activities as a reason for not joining their local cooperative. For further discussion of alternative modes of artistic production, see Jones 1991:chap. 3.
12. Younger women, even if they are mothers, are called *Mama* only by their children. Attainment of respectable status in the community and the title of *Mama* are usually earned only by women in stable marital or consensual unions.
13. Levy made this observation nearly twenty years ago, and it still rings true:

The qualities which make for good village leadership—unintrusiveness, sensitivity to group consensus, humility and the lack of any obvious ambition, a desire for harmony—are by no means virtues for political leadership or for a political representative at the *territorial* level, let alone at the metropolitan level in France. At both these levels partisanship, aggressiveness, and the ability to represent one's people against the interests of other legislators or executives seem to be necessary virtues. But these are the very characteristics the people of Piri find suspect, unpleasant, un-Tahitian, and dangerous in a leader. . . . The Tahitian language has many words indicating "stuck-up," "putting on airs," proud, making oneself high. The administrator, the *tavana*, and the villager should avoid such behavior. The lack of such tendencies is considered to be one of the characteristics of a *ma'ohi*, and one of the frequent descriptions of an *'afa* is that he is becoming "proud and inflated." (1973:206–207)

13. *'Afa* is a synonym for the French *demi*, referring to a person of mixed ethnic inheritance but particularly to those with at least some Polynesian ancestry who nonetheless act like Europeans.
14. The role of mayors in Polynesian communities has been widely discussed (Levy 1973:204–206; Oliver 1981:256–265; Baré 1987:408–409; Robineau 1988:189–190). The comparison of modern *tavana* (mayors) with traditional chiefs has been critiqued by Oliver (1981). My observations revealed a pattern of greater power and control over resources by mayors in the late 1980s than Oliver described for the 1950s.
15. Newbury discusses class division among Polynesians in reference to the charismatic nationalist leader Pouvana'a O'opa: "His role as a mouthpiece for deep-seated grievances on the part of the peasantry against the *demis* as a class . . . the foremost political leader of Tahiti in the 1950s was the antithesis of the *ari'i* class who reacted to European contact by attempting to select elements profitable to their own status, whereas Pouvanaa's reaction has been one of rejection" (1988:73–74).
16. It is interesting that the leadership of the Ma'ohi movement is almost exclusively male, whereas women dominate the *artisanat* movement. Of course, both movements include members of various genders (including male transvestites, or *mahu*), but the basic difference remains an intriguing problem for later analysis.

HETEROGLOSSIA IN SAMOAN ORATORY

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In this article I discuss the relationship between art and politics in the performance of a Samoan oratorical genre called *lāuga* [la:úŋa].¹ In the course of my discussion, I will reconsider the role of formalized language in the reproduction of the existing social order. In particular, I will reassess some of Bloch's (1975) hypotheses about the role of traditional oratory in maintaining the status quo. Drawing from the work of Bakhtin (1981) on the differences between the epic and the novel, I will argue that in the context of Samoan political and judicial meetings (*fono*), the ceremonial genre *lāuga* is functionally "corrupted" to serve needs different from those served by *lāuga* on other occasions. By framing discourse in the political arena to be related but different from the discourse of ceremonial exchanges, speechmakers can establish a context for real confrontation and, hence, for potential change. No longer an epic genre that celebrates an immutable past projected toward a predictable future, the *lāuga* in a *fono* becomes the vehicle for political appraisal and political confrontation. As we shall see, its forms are consistently adapted to such ends.

My analysis of the relationship between politics and verbal art in Samoa will be based on my experiences documenting, analyzing, and trying to learn traditional oratory in a Western Samoan village (Duranti 1981, 1983, 1984, 1990a, 1990b). The data for this study include participant observation of many occasions in which oratory was performed, informal discussions with knowledgeable speechmakers in the community, and transcripts of over thirty hours of audio recordings of oratorical speeches in spontaneous (i.e., nonelicited) performances. This arti-

cle is part of a more general project on the role of verbal art in conflict management situations and the mechanisms through which social actors frame their own actions to conform to or undermine culture- and event-specific expectations.

As typical of "epic" genres in general (see Bakhtin 1981), Samoan ceremonial *lāuga* celebrate an ancient world, full of mythical-historical characters and places, eternal values, and immutable hierarchies. The performance of such speeches characterizes ceremonial encounters of all kinds, including rites of passage (e.g., weddings, funerals) and ritual manifestations of acts of reciprocity (e.g., visits of traveling parties, payments for labor). I refer to such events as "ceremonies." In these contexts, there are several "aesthetic" canons that guide the performance of a *lāuga* and its appreciation by an audience. They make up a set of formal properties that guarantee the efficacy of the speech to connect the "absolute past" (Goethe and Schiller [1827] 1902–1907, quoted in Bakhtin 1981) to an equally idealized present. Some of the recurrent properties of traditional oratory found in ceremonial performances of *lāuga* are (a) the frequent use of arcane expressions, metaphors, and proverbs (see Schultz 1953), and the consistent selection of lexical items, called *'upu fa'aaloalo* (respectful words),² that index the high status of the people present as the descendants of mythical-historical figures; (b) a celebrative but controlled and rhythmically predictable tone of voice (the combination of high volume and low, deep voice is common) that is not suited for sudden changes of mood or genuine appeals to emotions; (c) the tendency to refer to people in terms of their positional instead of personal identities (e.g., as representatives of particular descent groups or sections of the village or district); (d) the identification of the speaker with the voice of tradition (*aganu'u*), so that the speaker is expected to focus on predictable truths and avoid controversial issues; (e) the preallocation of turns, that is, who gives the speech and when he gives it,³ is predetermined by a sometimes ritualistic, other times genuine verbal confrontation among the more experienced speechmakers; once a person has started a speech, he continues to the end unless he is ritually interrupted by an orator from another "side" (see below); any form of spontaneous dialogue with speakers alternating in an unpredictable manner is avoided; and (f) past, present, and future events are presented as unavoidable and therefore not open to criticisms or doubts.

Some of the same properties of "traditional oratory" led Bloch to posit his hypothesis about the coercive nature of "formalized language" (1975). As demonstrated by a number of studies (see Brenneis and Myers 1984), including my own work on Samoan political oratory (Duranti

1981, 1990b), there are, however, situations in which oratory is used to question at least some aspects of the social order and to accept the conflictual nature of ongoing social processes—what Turner called “social dramas” (1974). Such cases would seem at first to undermine or bluntly contradict Bloch’s thesis that in formalized language there is no room for discussion, dialogue, and logical argumentation. The counterexamples to Bloch’s argument, however, are not a total rejection of his view of the coercive role of traditional oratory. To make sense of the differences between Bloch’s claims and the reality of Samoan speechmaking practices, we need to refine for each case what we mean by “formalization of language,” and we must accept that there are different levels of formalization. Even Irvine’s (1979) critical discussion of formal events underestimates the degree to which the features of formality she discusses (increased code structuring, central focus of attention, code consistency, evoking of public identities), all of which can be found in the performance of Samoan *lāuga*, may vary in intensity and quality within the same event. What we might uniformly gloss as “formal language” within any given stretch of interaction may in fact show signs of variation and may in some instances come close to “informal talk.” We can properly test such a hypothesis only with detailed transcriptions of spontaneous verbal interactions and by matching local taxonomies with detailed linguistic and rhetorical analysis. If highly formalized language is identified with the celebration of the “absolute past,” the need to step into a controversial “relative present” might be matched by a speaker’s attempt to step out of the genre by creating a relative “freedom of expression” exemplified first of all not so much by a change in genres and codes (Comaroff 1975; Salmond 1975b) but by a mixture of forms and contents that evoke new contexts while maintaining a link with the old ones. I suggest that such a process occurs in Samoan political discourse.

In the Samoan political arena, participants—usually *matai*, that is, individuals holding titles—must confront the present and, even more important, control and fashion a future in which the polity can survive—whether in an old or new form. In this context, as I will show, some of the features of the ceremonial *lāuga* must be partly altered. The alleged search for “truth” and “justice” that characterizes the Samoan *fono* is in conflict with the canons of verbal art as a commemoration of the heroic past. Rather than one voice (the immutable and inaccessible voice of the ancestors), a multitude of “voices,” with different opinions and varying assumptions, must be heard. Instead of prophecies and certitudes, predictions and possibilities must be entertained. In addition to

arcane proverbs and metaphors, mundane and even disrespectful language may be heard. In the political arena, these needs are met by exploiting the genre while breaking some of its conventions, that is, by infiltrating its contents with contingent facts and urgent problems, and by corrupting its forms with a "mixed bag" of linguistic devices. In other words, it is through documentation of what Bakhtin (1981) called "heteroglossia" that we can appreciate the merging of political and artistic ends in the course of the daily battle through which the social system is tested and reproduced.

Variations across Contexts

In Samoa, the term *lāuga* is used for a wide range of speeches, some of which will not be discussed here. For instance, it not only covers traditional oratorical performances of all kinds but also has been extended to (Christian) church sermons, which lack the subdivisions characteristic of other *lāuga* (see below) and exhibit an overtly Western logic of expository prose that is at odds with traditional rhetorical strategies. Thus, Protestant sermons are dedicated to explaining a passage of written text (from the Bible), have a main theme (*matua*), which is announced to the audience, and are based on a monologic model of communication in which the preacher does not provoke or expect responses from the audience. More traditional *lāuga* are not based on written communication, have several "themes," most of which are the same from one context to another, and evoke audience responses, namely, phrases of appreciation such as *mālie!* (well said!) or *mo'i* (true). During the Christian service, no appreciation of the pastor's delivery is shown, although afterwards a few adults might individually congratulate him on his performance.⁴

When asked about the contrasting usage, Samoans are quick to point out that not all speeches casually referred to as *lāuga* are *lāuga* strictly speaking or in the true sense of the word. On any given occasion, there usually is one (more rarely two) "true" *lāuga*, with other (either preceding or following) speeches being seen as "replies" (*tali*) or simply "discussions" or "chats" (*talanoaga*). Thus, even within a *fono*, the word *lāuga* can be used in referring to a chief's speech (e.g., the speech presenting the chief's opinion and binding decision) but only in a loose sense of the term. Strictly speaking, in a *fono*, only the very first introductory speech of the day is considered a *lāuga*. As I will discuss below, the rest of the speeches are part of the discussion (*talanoaga*) of the agenda and do not follow too closely the rules governing the performance of *lāuga*, although they incorporate some features.

Although I previously drew a sharp distinction between *lāuga* and *talanoaga* (Duranti 1984), which I saw then as two separate genres, I have come now to the conclusion that the distinction is in fact one of degree. Speeches delivered on formal occasions are always seen as some version of *lāuga*, as shown by the fact that one can always refer to them by that term. What changes in a *talanoaga* situation is that the speechmaker is not tied to the traditional *lāuga* plan (see below) and can violate some of the constraints of formal speechmaking by introducing features of talk from other genres and contexts.

The *Lāuga* Plan

Despite idiosyncratic and contextual variation, even the most summary investigation of a few *lāuga* will reveal a well-defined structure across contexts. The existence of a basic pattern composed of various parts is readily admitted and recognized by all orators, who can talk at ease about names for different parts, their order, and their content; give examples of the expressions used within each part; and discuss possible variation to fit the occasion. As I learned during my first attempts to discover the basic principles of *lāuga* performance through informal interviews, individuals may, however, differ in their ability to provide a general (or ideal) plan that can explain specific contextual variants. For this reason, my categorization of *lāuga* organization is based not only on speechmakers' metastatements about the *lāuga* plan but also on recordings of actual performances and discussion with knowledgeable performers.

Any *lāuga* is composed of several parts (*vāega*)—typically four to seven—each part having a name and performing a different function. Recent work by a Samoan scholar, Tātupu Fa'afetai Mata'afa Tu'i (1987), has largely confirmed the prototypical *lāuga* plan I originally outlined on the basis of fieldwork in 1978–1979. Below, the *lāuga* plan I outlined for ceremonies (Duranti 1981, 1983) is compared with the one Tu'i proposed for the *fono*.

Duranti (1981)

Tu'i (1987)

1. *folasaga*
introduction

1. *folasaga* (also *tūvaoga* or
paepae-ulufanua)
introduction

2. *'ava*
kava

2. *'ava*
kava

3. *fa'afetai*
thanksgiving

3. *fa'afetai i le alofa o le Atua*
thanksgiving to the Lord's
love

4. *taeao*
mornings

4. *taeao*
mornings

5. *pa'ia*
sacred [titles]

5. *pa'ia*
sacred titles

6. *'auga o le aso*
foundation of the day

6. *faiā* or *matā'upu*
agenda

7. *fa'amatafi lagi*
clearing of the sky

7. *fa'amatafiga o lagi*
clearing of skies

The sequence and distinctions presented above should be seen as an ideal plan that is rarely fully realized. One quality of a competent speechmaker is the ability to adapt this ideal plan to the contingencies of the day or even of the moment. Thus, the number of parts and the length of each part are important elements in the evaluation of a *lāuga* performance. Whereas a young or inexperienced *failāuga* (orator) might use speechmaking as an opportunity to show off his knowledge of traditional customs and hence go through each part of the plan, an experienced and skillful *failāuga* knows when to be concise and when to be lengthy. Furthermore, on many occasions a speechmaker is formally interrupted by another orator. The shortening of the ideal plan of a *lāuga* is in fact a common feature of verbal performance (Duranti n.d.).

The *Lāuga* as an Epic Genre

Lāuga in ceremonies and the first *lāuga* in a *fono* celebrate mythical-historical characters and places, eternal values, and immutable hierarchies. In this ideal model of social life, "things are beautiful" (*matagofie mea 'uma*) and words are powerful enough to constitute the social order. One of the recurrent lines of some *lāuga* is *e le'i liua*, "[it] has not changed," followed by names of *matai* titles and ceremonial address forms. The world represented is a place of harmony, where social hierarchies are immutable. For instance, the sacredness of the titles, their dignity, is portrayed as something that comes from the past (*vavau*) and reaches eternity (*fa'avavau*): *'o pa'ia mai le vavau e o'o i le*

fa'avavau. The speechmaker professes belief in these titles and their immutability: *'ou te talitonu* (I believe) is a recurrent phrase introducer in certain *lāuga*.

Much of the *lāuga* is dedicated to praising and recognizing powerful figures and events that are depicted as beyond human control. Thus, the "Thanksgiving" (part 3) recognizes the Lord's power to bring an end to life on earth and thanks Him for allowing the particular occasion to take place. "Mornings" (part 4) celebrates important events in the history of Samoa, for instance, the arrival of the Gospel. The "sacred" names (part 5) reminds everyone of the power of mythical-historical figures and their descendants, who are depicted as the "gods on earth."

Like the idealist philosophers criticized by Marx—Hegel in particular—the Samoan speechmakers present to their audience a model of the universe in which the traditional social order, with its hierarchies and values, is given historical and philosophical justification. In many ways, the world and style of the *lāuga* is reminiscent of Bakhtin's characterization of the "epic" as opposed to the "novel" in Western literature:

The world of epic is the national heroic past: it is a world of "beginnings" and "peak times" in the national history, a world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of "firsts" and "bests." . . . The epic . . . has been from the beginning a poem about the past, and the authorial position immanent in the epic and constitutive for it . . . is the environment of a man speaking about a past that is to him inaccessible, the reverent point of view of a descendent. (1981:13)

The style and discourse of the epic, like the style and discourse of the *lāuga*, is removed from everyday discourse, where one may find openendedness, indecision, indeterminacy (ibid.:16). Instead we find certitude and, with it, a world of established hierarchies. Instead of knowledge of contingent facts we find memory. Creativity is manifested in the way in which the past is reevoked and not in the manner in which the present (through the past) is reevaluated:

The absolute past is a specifically evaluating (hierarchical) category. . . . In the past, everything is good: all the really good things . . . occur *only* in this past. The epic absolute past is the single source and beginning of everything good for all later times as well.

In ancient literature it is memory, and not knowledge, that

serves as the source and power for the creative impulse. That is how it was, it is impossible to change it: the tradition of the past is sacred. There is as yet no consciousness of the possible relativity of any past. (Ibid.:15)

In Bakhtin's view, the epic world cannot be changed, because it is beyond the realm of human activity. In the *lāuga*, the social system is presented in such a way that one cannot explicitly argue against its premises, at least not without stepping out of genre (see below).

Formalized Language and Power

A characterization of traditional oratory similar to the notion of "epic" proposed above has been used by Bloch to argue that strict formal canons condition and hence coerce speakers to accept what has been said or presupposed by other speakers: "It is because the formalisation of language is a way whereby one speaker can coerce the response of another that it can be seen as a form of social control. It is really a type of communication where rebellion is impossible and only revolution could be feasible. It is a situation where power is all or nothing" (1975:20).

For Bloch the formalized language used in traditional oratory typically works outside of the canons of empirical evidence and logical reasoning whereby contradiction is possible. In traditional oratory, contradiction would not be possible because there is only one truth. Thus, following each statement there is only a limited set of other possible statements, each of which substantiates the prior one and cannot be denied by empirical evidence or logical argumentation.

Bloch has been widely criticized for his "deterministic" view of the relationship between language and social order (see Brenneis and Myers 1984; Burling 1977; Myers and Brenneis 1984; Payne 1981) and for his assumptions about what constitutes "formalization" or a "formal event" (Irvine 1979). In fact, Bloch's position is an attempt to invert the "vulgar" materialists' view of the unidirectional impact of the base (economic structure) on superstructure (e.g., law, religion, art) by stating the fundamental role played by language in human praxis. In comparing his proposal with my data on Samoan oratory, I have become convinced that, with some minor modifications, we can maintain Bloch's generalization while complying with some of his critics' points. The Samoan data on oratory across events suggest that Bloch's argument about the constraining force of formal oratory should be contextualized rather than assumed to hold across all kinds of speech events.

In the Samoan case, Bloch's generalization might be accurate for those situations in which the most prototypically ceremonial *lāuga* are performed, but not necessarily for the speeches that are more distant from that model. In particular, it does not seem to describe the use of oratory in political and judiciary contexts such as the Samoan *fono*. In ceremonial contexts (outside of the *fono*), the day is sacred because of the perfect match of what the *matai* planned and what has resulted from successful negotiations. The performance of the speeches typically celebrates a found agreement: between the family of the groom and the family of the bride in an exchange of dowry, among the members of the extended family first and then between the family and the village when a new titleholder is installed, between workers and those who commissioned them when payments are made and the products of labor delivered, and so on.

Whereas in ceremonial contexts the *lāuga* is the final act of an often long series of negotiations, in the *fono* the *lāuga* opens the meeting. It is delivered before the discussion of the agenda, that is, when participants are about to argue with one another while searching for the truth (*mea tonu*) and the right solution (*mea sa'o*). In a ceremony, the world found by the speechmaker before delivering the main speech of the day is a world of reassessed order, which he helps constitute through his speech. The world the speechmaker finds at the beginning of a *fono*, rather, is one of disorder, contrast, and disagreement, often tinted with strong feelings of resentment, anger, envy, and misunderstood or misplaced pride. Accordingly, although the first *lāuga* in a *fono* opens the meeting by reassessing the way things were (the "absolute past" of Bakhtin's epic) and the way things should be (the normative order), it also assumes a forthcoming discussion in which participants must abandon the world of past and eternal values and enter the contingent world, full of uncertain truths, conflicting narratives, and divergent perspectives. The speakers in a *fono* verbally handle these conflicts by progressively removing or changing some of the properties of ceremonial *lāuga*.

In this process the tension between the formalization of verbal art on the one hand and political, pragmatic goals on the other is acted out. The same ethos that keeps the tradition alive through symbolic-communicative acts such as the ceremonial *lāuga* also enforces the need to expose differences, disagreement, ugly facts, violations, faults, and individual and group responsibility. As in other Pacific cultures (see the articles in White and Watson-Gegeo 1990), in Samoa it is believed that the return to social harmony and mutual love (*fealofani*) requires the exposure of the ugly (*matagā*) facts. This is the way to clean up and

make the village beautiful again (*teuteu le nu'u*). During the discussions, those who have violated the law must be confronted with their responsibility, shamed, and punished. If a political decision must be made, the different positions must be presented and evaluated, and a consensus must be reached.

This process, full of dangers and uncertainties, cannot take place in the most typical *lāuga* format. Like the end of the epic and the birth of the novel discussed by Bakhtin, the new set of contents and implicit worldviews needs new forms of expression. Such forms have been produced by introducing a number of important changes in and around the *lāuga* performance. The following compares some of the salient differences in features between *lāuga* in ceremonies and in *fono*.⁵

Ceremony

1. Before the *lāuga*, there is a debate (*fa'atau*) about who should deliver the speech.
2. The number of *lāuga* is known beforehand (usually two parties—e.g., guests and hosts, or family of the bride and family of the groom—deliver one speech each). The reply (*tali*) to the first *lāuga* may in some cases partly overlap with it. This overlap may or may not be seen as competitive (see 8).
3. The *lāuga* is part of an exchange, that is, a complex ritual of reciprocity.
4. The speechmaker is recognized as skillful (*poto*), (being the one who won the debate [see 1]).

Fono

1. There is no debate.
2. The number of *lāuga* may not be known in advance.
3. There is no exchange of goods.
4. The speechmaker is the one who holds a particular title or role in the meeting.

5. People continue to evaluate the beauty of the speech for days after the performance.
6. The speech often sanctions an agreement of some sort.
7. The speech is usually addressed to a particular group or lineage within the village.
8. The speechmaker may be formally interrupted (*seu*) by the other party, who might be testing his skills.
9. Once the speech is over, no parts are added, that is, no corrections are made.
10. The address forms and titles mentioned are those relevant to the occasions.
11. The speech is usually delivered at a high volume and with a distinct voice quality (e.g., guttural).
12. The orator takes off his shirt and lets parts of his tattoo (if he has one) show.
5. People are less likely to make comments about the beauty of the speech.
6. The speech does not represent an agreement but the beginning of a negotiation process.
7. The speech is addressed to the entire village or assembly, which may include several villages.
8. The speechmaker cannot be formally interrupted, although he may be informally interrupted.
9. Another, senior *matai* may correct or repair a faulty performance, for example, if something was left out.
10. Part of the speech is dedicated to greeting or recognizing all the most important titleholders in the village.
11. The voice of the speechmaker conveys a sense of the routine at a normal to low volume.
12. The orator usually wears a shirt while he is delivering the speech. (Usually, only the people who sit in the "back" region of the house and are in charge of

preparing and serving
kava take off their shirts
 during the event.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 13. There is public compensation for the speechmaker. | 13. There is no compensation for the speechmaker. |
|---|---|

The features listed above indicate that both the speaker and the audience of the ceremonial *lāuga* are more committed to the “performance aspects” of speechmaking, as discussed by a number of scholars including Bauman (1977) and Hymes (1975). There is “an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content” (Bauman 1977:11). In ceremonial exchanges, the delivery of the *lāuga* is both presented and received with particular attention to all details that enhance the sacred nature of the occasion and make everyone proud of participating in it. In a *fono*, however, both the speaker and the audience are less concerned with performance per se and some of the canons of verbal art are lifted. In a *fono* there is not much enjoyment of the *lāuga* performance; participants are too worried about what is coming next. They are silently rehearsing their own speeches or trying to anticipate the other parties’ moves in the forthcoming debate. In this way the problem of faithfulness to artistic form and content, on the one hand, and faithfulness to contingent, pragmatic needs, on the other, is partly resolved by downplaying, in political arenas, the artistic dimensions of ceremonial speechmaking. The delivery of the *lāuga* in a *fono* is more like a “job” that needs to get done than an honor or an occasion for proud display of verbal skills.⁶

Variations within a *Fono*

After the opening speeches, the *fono* discourse becomes even further removed from the epic form. From the beginning of the event, when the first *lāuga* is performed as an opening speech, to the discussion part, when the issues of the day are presented and analyzed, the *matai*’s language is transformed into a truly hybrid genre, which still utilizes the lexicon and other aspects of *lāuga* but at the same time allows for features of everyday talk and register markers that are not typical of the “epic” genre and are even less typical of the formalized language described by Bloch.

In particular, when compared to ceremonial speeches, *fono* political

speeches are characterized by the use of a variety of codes, registers, and strategies that violate at least three of Irvine's (1979) four features of formalized language, namely, code consistency, increased code structuring, and focus on positional identities. In the *fono*, after the initial *lāuga*, the consistency of the code and the restrictions imposed on what can be said are partly released toward the creation of a "blurred genre" in which multiple voices and multiple perspectives can be heard. This domain of speaking exhibits what Bakhtin has called "heteroglossia" (*raznorečie*), namely the social diversity of speech, the combination of "centrifugal forces" in language, which move away from standardization and codification of one particular register. These forces conspire to produce a language that "represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth" (Bakhtin 1981:291).

Features of Heteroglossia in the *Fono* Discussion

The following features of the language used in speeches in the discussion part of the *fono* demonstrate the heteroglot nature of *lāuga* in *fono* when compared with the more controlled and unified character of *lāuga* in other contexts. They correspond to features (a) through (f) of formalized language listed at the beginning of this article.

Mixed registers. Whereas the first *lāuga* is consistently full of respectful terms (*'upu fa'aaloalo*) for the *matai*'s actions, feelings, relations, and possessions, later on in the discussion part (*talanoaga*), alongside the respectful words we also find ordinary and even profane words, as shown in examples 1 and 2.⁷

(1) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)

249 Moe'ono; *oi kālōfa!*
'Oh, too bad!'

(2) (*Fono* of 17 March 1979; full Samoan text in Duranti 1990a:474)

Moe'ono: I also spoke on that day when you had come to the house. "A., stop, there is an important affair (going on)." Oh! But you came back outside (you instead) repeated those words "Fuck off! Ass! Prick!"

These are words that would never appear in a ceremonial *lāuga*, but they can be embedded in reported speech, in recounting events that are being evaluated in a *fono*.

Other kinds of mixed codes include the use of English loan words, as shown in example 3, where the English borrowing *sikolasipi* (from “scholarship”) is used, and 4, where we find the informal *suipi* (from “sweep”), a metaphor from card playing—not a very “dignified” activity—in place of the Samoan *mālō* (see line 420 in example 11 below).

(3) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)

- 329 Moe'ono; *ai ua iai le agaga fa'apea 'o ia.*
 ‘Maybe this is the way he sees it.’
 330 ‘*ua sikolasipi.*
 ‘[He] had a scholarship.’

(4) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)

- 761 Usu; *kau ke suipi.*
 ‘[We] sweep up [i.e., win].’

Affective particles. The display of affect is also more common in *talanoaga*. Thus, for instance, the vocative and endearing postnominal particle *-e* is at times added to common and proper nouns, as shown in examples 5 and 6.

(5) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979. The senior orator Moe'ono is trying to convince the young chief Savea to withdraw his suit against the district M.P.)

- 416 Moe'ono; *ia 'Saveae.*
 ‘So, oh Savea.’

(6) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979. The chief Tevaseu tries to cool people off after the orator Mata'afa—from his part of the district—has repeatedly scolded important members of the assembly.)

- 1393 Tevaseu; *'āigae!*
 ‘Oh Chiefs!’

Personal identities. In the *talanoaga* part of the *fono*, personal names may be used next to titles. Although this happens only when there is possible ambiguity between two or more parties sharing the same title—as in the village of Falefā in the late 1970s, when the Savea title was split between two men, Savelio and Sione—it demonstrates a concern

for individuals that violates the epic vision of ancestral powers remaining unchanged and unaffected by individuals' actions or deeds:

(7) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979)

- 159 Moe'ono; *ia 'o lea fo'i ua:-*
 'So now also has'
 160 *'ua koso fo'i le va'a o le Sa'o 'Ese'ese.*
 'The boat of the Sa'o 'Ese'ese has
 been pulled in [i.e., he is running for
 office].'
 161 *le afioga iā Savea Sioge.*
 'His Highness Savea Sione.'

Reported speech. Heteroglossia is also constituted by the display of multiple perspectives as produced by the use of reported speech. Reported speech is a common device used to insinuate the possibility of alternative views and discording voices (Vološinov 1973).

(8) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979. The female orator Tafili is speaking in defense of her brother, the chief Savea Sione)

- 2886 Tafili; *'o lea lava 'ou ke kaukala aku ai . . .*
 'Now is the time that I am speaking'
 2887 *e leaga 'o 'upu gei 'ou ke kaukala iai,*
 'because these are the words I am talk-
 ing about,'
 2888 *"'ua fa'akau Savea e Igu i kupe" . . .*
 '"Savea has been bought by Inu with
 money."'
 2889 *ia 'ua kakau ai lā ga kulāfogo 'upu gā,*
 'Well those words must be [challenged
 in] court.'

Not only are verbs of saying referring to someone else's previous speech and to specific wordings used by others much more common in the discussion part of *fono*, speakers also quote and question one another's statements.

Dialogue. In a few cases, especially when there is strong disagreement or a need to clarify some obscure point, the macro-turn format of the *fono* speeches, in which a speaker holds the floor until he is completely through with his speech (see Duranti 1981), is broken by question-answer pairs or assertion-evaluation sequences that introduce a fla-

vor of everyday conversation in the highly controlled and ritualized style of public speaking:

(9) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)

1384 Mata'afa: We will also elect our own M.P.!

1385 (1.0)

1386 Moe'ono: Fine!

(10) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979. The chief Savea Sione has just finished delivering a speech defining his position.)

3176 Moe'ono: Thank you [for] speaking Savea . . .
[. . .]

3186 I am not very clear

3187 [about] these words I am taking note of

3188 whether they are words [said by] Inu

3189 or by one of our people [about]

3190 the forty [dollars] that Inu paid

3191 so that you would run in the elections.

3192 That is what I would like to get clarified.

3193 Savea: Well Moe'ono I am approaching you again

3194 . . .

3195 [since] our assembly wants to get an answer from me

3196 . . .

3197 Those very words were by a *matai* in this village.

3198 Moe'ono: Words by a *matai* in this village?

3199 Savea: This village.

(continued)

In this last example, one of the rare cases of a request for clarification during a *fono*, despite the respectful words and the ceremonial phrases (e.g., "words I am taking note of" or "I am approaching you"), the exchange comes closer and closer to a dialogical, almost conversational interaction between Savea and Moe'ono instead of a series of speeches in which each of them globally assesses the other's words without making himself vulnerable to the other's immediate response.

Logical argumentation. Alternative views and comparisons between past and future events are also achieved by the recurrent exploitation of logical argumentations in the form of "if-then" statements.

(11) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)

- 419 Moe'ono; 'a *kākou* ō *ko'akolu*, (1.0)
 'If all the three of us go [i.e., run for office]'
- 420 'ua *mālō Lufilufi*. (2.5)
 'Lufilufi will have won.'
- 421 ?; *mālie!*
 'Well said!'
 [. . .]
- 486 Moe'ono; *auā e vaivai Iuli*
 'Because [if] Iuli is weak'
- 487 'ou *ke vaivai fo'i*.
 'I am also weak.'
- 488 ?; *mālie!*
 'Well said!'

These rhetorical figures are common in the *fono* discussion and violate the characterization of formalized language presented by Bloch, for whom "formalized language is . . . non-logical and any attempt to represent it as such, whether by a paraphrase into ordinary language which implies 'explanation' or by the use of tabular representation containing a logical form, is misleading" (1975:21).

These features of the *fono* talk indicate that we must think of "formality" or "formalized language" as variable not only in a cross-contextual and cross-cultural sense, as discussed by Irvine (1979), but also in the sense of intracontextual variability, whereby rules are more or less, sometimes progressively, altered in the course of what is defined and perceived as the same event.

I should point out here that the *matai* in a *fono* are quite aware of the plasticity of the genre *lāuga*. The senior orator who acts as the chairman of the meeting provides an explicit invitation, after the first introductory *lāuga*, to talk things out, to chat:

(12) (*Fono* of 7 April 1990)

- 398 Moe'ono; *ma:- 'o lo kākou aso*,
 'and our day,'
- 399 'o *lea fa'auso*⁸ *loa le kākou aofia* . . .
 'now our assembly is open for discussion'
- 400 ?; *mālie!*
 'Well said!'
 [

- 401 Moe'ono; 'o lea ua fa'akigo mai makā'upu e-
'Now that the topics have been clarified by'
- 402 ?; mālie!
'Well said!'
- 403 Moe'ono; 'oe le Laukogia.
'You the Lautogia [title referring to first speaker].'
- 404 makā'upu e uiga i le Falelua . . .
'Topics about the two subvillages'
- 405 kākou kalagoa muamua i ai.
'let us first talk about it.'
- 406 . . .
- 407 Loa; (mā)lie!
'Well said!'

One of the functions of the conventional phrase /'o lea fa'auso loa le kākou aofia/ (in line 399), with which the discussion is started, is to relieve participants from complying with the canons of *lāuga* performance and to allow them to introduce features of less formalized and more colloquial talk to fit the needs of the discussion.

Metacommunicative statements of this nature also abound in the rest of the discussion, as several of the participants explicitly frame their own speech as "discussion" or "talk":

(13) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)

- 685 Usu; 'ou ke kaukala aku ma la'u amio kogu.
'I am talking [to you] with honesty
[lit., with my true behavior].'

Such expressions as /'ou ke kaulaka/ (I am talking) must be seen in opposition to phrases like /'ou ke kalikogu/ (I believe, trust) which, as I mentioned earlier, characterize the ceremonial *lāuga*.

Conclusions

The contrast between artistic verbal genres and everyday talk is common across societies. Among the Malagasy, for example, a distinction is made between *resaka* (ordinary talk) and *kabary*, a context-sensitive multipurpose ceremonial genre similar to the Samoan *lāuga* (see Keenan 1973). The Samoan case is special in that the dichotomy

between “ceremonial speech” and “talk” or between a formal, artistic genre and a register designed for political debate is at work within the same event; the boundaries between the two are kept tentative, purposely fragile. If the interaction gets out of control, the more formal features of the artistic genre can be resumed to reestablish order and balance. Within political encounters, the speech register used in the discussion part displays some of the features of conversation but never completely matches the kind of casual talk that might go on among some of the same individuals in a different setting (or before the meeting starts). The switch from *lāuga* to *talanoaga* within the *fono* is thus a rhetorical (and politically pregnant) device to lift some of the canons and the expectations implicit in the kinds of ceremonial performances where *lāuga* are otherwise used. Such a move is necessary to discuss controversial and potentially damaging issues without putting the overall social system at stake. By changing genre, the celebration of the status quo is momentarily suspended, while participants remain engaged in the task at hand—the explanation and resolution of the conflicts or crimes brought to the attention of the *matai*. The goal is to create a “time out” from “epic talk” and hence predictable and beautiful acts. It is only in this “liminal space” (Turner 1974) that things can be talked out, complaints heard, conflicts aired, contradictions displayed, and opinions confronted. Only after this discussion process can the village be made beautiful again and its internal and external social ties (*vā*) be reestablished or mended.

The Samoan data suggest, rather than an absolute distinction between “traditional oratory” and “conversation,” as one might infer from a strict interpretation of Bloch’s argument (1975), a case in which traditional ceremonial speechmaking bends, without completely breaking, to the needs of political speechmaking and a mixed, spurious genre is created (the discussion speeches within a *fono*). Like Bakhtin’s “novel” vis-à-vis the earlier “epic,” speechmaking in a political event such as the *fono* is parasitic on the *lāuga*: it uses its parts, tropes, lexicon, grammar, and at times even its name, but it also infiltrates it with a type of discourse that does not belong to *lāuga* properly speaking and is not quite in the realm governed by aesthetic canons. For this reason, each individual speech within the discussion part of the meeting can also be called *lāuga* but only in a loose, evocative, and at the same time “corrupt” way. When pressed, Samoans will always recognize that in a *fono* only the opening speeches are “real” *lāuga*. Even those, however, are not as aesthetically pleasing as ceremonial *lāuga*. Thus, it is not by accident that most of the times I asked to meet a good *failāuga* (speech-

maker), I was taken to someone who was well known for skills in ceremonial settings and not in political arenas.

The skills involved in political oratory are thus related to but not identical with those required for ceremonial speechmaking. Politics and verbal art, as I have tried to show here, are closely related domains of human praxis that rely upon each other, but they should not be confused with one another.

NOTES

1. This is an extensively revised version of the paper "The Conflict between Beauty and Truth in Samoan Political Oratory" presented at the session on "The Arts and Politics" organized by Karen Nero at the 1990 meetings of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania. I would like to thank Pamela Rosi for her encouraging comments and Paul Kroskrity for his helpful suggestions on how to revise an earlier draft.

2. These are words that refer to high-status individuals (typically chiefs and orators), their actions, properties, feelings, relatives, possessions, and body parts (Milner 1961; Duranti 1992).

3. I have used the masculine pronoun in referring to orators, given that they are overwhelmingly male. There are, however, a few women in Samoa who hold an orator title. Although oratorical contests tend to be exclusively male, women use oratory in a variety of contexts, especially in women's committees.

4. Sermons, like any other form of public performance, are routinely evaluated, but in separate, often more private, contexts, when people discuss the preacher's ability to get a point across or his knowledge of the sacred scriptures.

5. This list is a revised and expanded version of a similar figure presented in Duranti 1984.

6. Artistic skills in verbal performance are on display during ceremonial encounters, whereas they are downplayed in a *fono*.

7. *Transcription Conventions*. The transcripts used in this article were prepared with the help of "SCAN," a program written by John B. Haviland for the personal computer. The conventions are basically those introduced by Gail Jefferson (see the appendix in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) for analysis of English conversation, with the following exceptions: I use a semicolon following identification of speakers (the colon is used after the speaker's name when only the English translation is provided). A stand-alone bracket "[" signals a point of overlap; "=" indicates latching; parentheses indicate uncertain hearing or timed pause; brackets around English words in translations indicate interpolation to ease understanding or to match Samoan idioms with English ones; three dots indicate an untimed pause; three dots between parentheses indicate that a speaker's following words have been omitted; and three dots between brackets signal that a portion of the transcript has been omitted in the middle of an example for simplification. A comma indicates a slight rising intonation; a hyphen is a break in the flow of talk, often realized as a glottal stop; a colon indicates lengthening of a sound. Samoan is transcribed according to traditional Samoan orthography—i.e., the inverted apostrophe (') stands for a glottal stop, a

macron on a vowel (ā, ē, etc.) indicates length, and the letter “g” stands for a velar nasal (transcribed as “ng” in other Polynesian languages)—taking into consideration sociolinguistic variation.

A note on *phonological registers*. Samoan has two phonological registers: *tautala lelei*, or “good speech,” used in writing and for speaking in Western-inspired activities such as schooling and Christian rites, and *tautala leaga*, or “bad speech,” used in both formal and informal traditional activities such as the ceremonial occasions mentioned in this article, *fono* discussions, and talk among intimates. In “bad speech,” the sounds /t/ and /n/ disappear and in their place /k/ and /ŋ/ (here written /g/) are used. For this reason, a word like *tonu* (true, real) is pronounced /koŋu/ (here written /kogu/). In this article, I use good speech when I discuss Samoan words and phrases in general terms, but I preserve the bad speech pronunciation, between slashes, any time it occurred in actual talk. This means that the same word may be found in two different versions, for example, as *tonu* and /kogu/.

8. The word *fa'auso* could be literally translated “like brother(s)” or, more precisely, “like (*fa'a*) siblings of the same sex (*uso*).” If we accept this etymology of the term, the expression *fa'auso le fono* would imply a call for “brotherly” (or “sisterly”) as opposed to formal and antagonistic behavior.

THE MONSTER (A FANTASY)

A One-Act Play by
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University of Hawai'i at Manoa*

With an Interview with the Playwright

* * * * *

The first performance of this play was at the University of the South Pacific in October 1987. It was directed by the playwright, and the cast was as follows:

Ta	:	Salote Nawalowalo
Rua	:	Maxine Subramany
Folu	:	Felicia Reade
Spirits	:	Joseph Ravu Tarcisius Tara Vilsoni Hereniko Felicia Reade
The Monster	:	Felicia Reade

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The Monster © 1989 by Vilsoni Hereniko. First published in *The Monster and Other Plays*, Suva: Mana Publications.

Characters

TA	These parts could be played by an all-female cast, although
RUA	they should all look different from each other. Or Ta could
FOLU	be male, and Rua and Folu females. Ta and Rua should be
MONSTER	dressed in complementary colours. The spirits could wear
SPIRITS	masks on their faces and dry banana leaves on their bodies.
	Each one carries a war club. Or they could be dressed as
	described in the text.

The stage is strewn with odds and ends—empty coconut shells including a burnt coconut seedling, bits of firewood, a dead branch of a tree, leaves here and there, a toppled wooden bench underneath which is a broken bicycle wheel, etc.

It is night. Sounds of shooting, screaming, running feet, wailing, etc. can be heard in the distance. As the sounds diminish, the moon rises. A beggar (Ta) is seen sitting on the bench eating. Next to her is a basket made of green coconut leaves containing the following: one half-empty tin of fish, one toothbrush, half a dalo, half a loaf of bread, some water in a plastic bottle, some left-over curry, four lemons, etc.

Barely visible at stage left is Rua, who is massaging her leg. After a while she crawls over to where the bench is, startling Ta.

- TA. Who are you? What are you doing here?
- RUA. You brought me here. Remember?
- TA. No, I can't remember. Anyway, I don't want you here.
- RUA. But what can I do?
- TA. I don't know. Why don't you go back?
- RUA. I can't.
- TA. Why not?
- RUA. There is nothing to go back to. Besides, I was born here.
- TA. There's not enough food for two people.
- (Ta grabs the basket of food and moves away)*
- RUA. I don't eat much.

TA. That's what you say. I don't believe you.

RUA. I tell the truth.

TA. So do I.

RUA. What about the rules? You can't ignore the rules.

TA. What rules?

RUA. We agreed on the rules.

TA. I can choose to ignore the rules. *(With an air of generosity)* But because I'm a fair and just person, I shall abide by the rules.

(Rua gets into a wrestling pose. Ta approaches and clutches Rua by the buttocks. Rua gets angry and says "foul," appealing to the audience. They hold each other by the waist and shout "ta [one], rua [two], folu [three]" and then wrestle. This wrestling match should be humorous for the audience but taken seriously by Ta and Rua. Ta wins, goes to the basket, sits down and eats. Rua walks away to the end of stage left, bruised and disgruntled. Rua stares at Ta as the latter eats)

RUA. I'm hungry.

TA. You'll have to win.

RUA. Does it have to be wrestling? What about soccer?

TA. What about rugby? League rugby? *(Chuckles to herself)*

RUA. No. I hate rugby. Besides, we don't have any balls.

TA. Haven't you? *(Laughs)*

RUA. What do you mean?

TA. Why don't we count each other's teeth? *(Laughs)* Not funny?

RUA. No.

TA. *(Pause, Ta looks around)* Do you think we are the only ones left?

RUA. I don't know. Why don't you go and find out?

TA. And what will you do?

RUA. I'll be on guard . . . just in case.

TA. Why don't you go and I'll stay?

RUA. I thought about it first.

TA. So what? I thought about it second.

RUA. You're not logical.

TA. You're not popular.

RUA. Me. Not popular? (*Chuckles at the unexpected answer*) Why did you ask me to come?

TA. Did I ask you to come?

RUA. What a memory you've got. So glad I haven't poured my heart out to you.

TA. It was most thoughtful. Thank-you.

RUA. You don't care about me, do you?

TA. As a matter of fact, I don't.

RUA. Why not?

TA. Look at you? And look at me.

RUA. I've got two eyes, one nose, two ears . . . and so have you.

TA. I don't mean that.

RUA. What then?

TA. Your skin's a different colour. And your hair, and the things you like to eat, the clothes you wear, the colour of your eyes.

RUA. You're a . . .

TA. I'm not. Just a realist. The audience thinks I am. (*To audience*) Yes, I know you do, but I'm not.

RUA. What the audience thinks is not important?

TA. I don't care what they think. If I let them decide for me, I shall lose control.

RUA. What about me? I was born here.

TA. DON'T SAY THAT!

RUA. Sorry. Have I offended you?

TA. Yes. Don't you know who I am? (*Towering over Rua*)

RUA. Who are you?

TA. I am me. The one and only.

RUA. (*Not really seeing*) I see.

TA. (*Taking out some lemons from the basket*). Here. Let's juggle. Who knows? Maybe you'll beat me at this sport.

RUA. Juggling is not a sport.

TA. It is. My father used to play it.

RUA. Not my father. I've never played it before.

TA. You can't blame me for that. On your marks, go.

(*They shout "ta, rua, folu" and then juggle. Ta wins after Rua's lemons have fallen on the ground. Ta goes to the basket and takes out a toothbrush and begins to brush. Offers Rua a small piece of bread from the basket*)

TA. Go on, take it.

RUA. (*Surprised*) Thank you.

TA. You don't know me well, do you?

RUA. (*Pause*) Why do you want to brush your teeth?

TA. (*Posing, smiling to the audience*) So I can keep smiling my famous smile.

RUA. What for?

(*Ta laughs as she flashes a smile to the audience. If possible, Ta's teeth should remind the audience of Dracula. Rua stealthily moves over to the basket and peers over it*)

TA. Get away!

(*Rua timidly hobbles over to the other end of the stage*)

TA. Don't you have any relatives to look after you?

RUA. I did. But they're all killed, or moved away.

TA. Your face looks familiar. Are you related to . . .

(Ta looks around and whispers in Rua's ear. Rua nods)

TA. Really?

RUA. Why do you want to know?

TA. Were you at the party?

RUA. *(Looking around furtively)* Yes. I was serving the drinks. You grabbed me when the shooting started and pulled me outside. Then we ran . . . *(Looking around as though afraid)*

TA. And then?

RUA. There was an explosion . . . that's all I know.

TA. But my husband. He was with me at the party. Did you see him?

RUA. There were many men there. Which one was your husband? The ugly one? *(Laughs)*

(Ta chases Rua around the bench. She picks up the burnt coconut seedling and throws it at Rua. It misses)

TA. I was drunk.

RUA. Now you're sober.

TA. I was drunk. It was me who caused the explosion. I'm not responsible for my actions. I loved my husband.

RUA. I loved mine. But he ran away.

TA. You were married?

RUA. Yes. Three times.

TA. Why three times?

RUA. Why not?

TA. Of course. *(Ta paces the floor, confused)* Did you say you were married?

RUA. Yes.

TA. To a man?

RUA. No, to my dog. (*Laughs*)

TA. Really?

RUA. Who else?

TA. So you're married to a dog.

RUA. (*Realising Ta's inadequacy*) I was married to a man.

TA. You're a woman then.

RUA. Do you want to see for yourself?

TA. (*Quickly*) No, I'm a Christian.

RUA. You are? I've never met one before.

TA. Take a good look then. (*Sits and flashes a smile*)

RUA. Is that how you can tell?

TA. Yes. By the smile.

RUA. I see.

TA. So you're a woman?

RUA. Does it matter to you?

TA. Yes, a great deal. It complicates matters.

RUA. You mean, when you asked me if I would keep you warm, you thought I was a man?

TA. I told you, I was drunk.

RUA. I don't believe you.

TA. Stop treating me like a child! I know I have a bad memory, but don't treat me like this.

RUA. Not just a bad memory. You smell as well! (*Ta picks up the wheel and rolls it at Rua who trips over it while trying to dodge*) I'm frightened. Comfort me.

TA. Go away. I don't want you here.

RUA. I'm lonely.

TA. So am I.

- RUA. A hug?
- TA. No! Stay there!
- RUA. I'm starving. Help me.
- TA. The rules.
- RUA. I'm ready. (*Stands up for the challenge*)
- TA. Let's handwrestle. Yes?
- RUA. Yes. (*They shout "ta, rua, folu" and wrestle. Ta wins again*)
That was unfair. Your hands are bigger than mine.
- TA. And your hands are smaller. Small is beautiful. (*Laughs*)
(*Ta nibbles at the piece of left-over bread from the basket. She drinks as well*)
- RUA. It's not fair. Why should you be in control all the time. Don't you find that basket heavy?
- TA. Of course it's heavy. But this is my talent. Carrying the burden for other people. I don't mind, really.
- RUA. I wish you'd let me do it.
- TA. Tell you what. If you can prove that you're a better speaker, I'll let you carry it.
- RUA. You mean give a speech?
- TA. Yes.
- RUA. What kind of speech?
- TA. A love speech. (*Laughs*)
- RUA. Now that isn't fair. You've got the advantage. Let's toss a coin.
- TA. Do you have a coin?
- RUA. (*Checks pockets, but couldn't find any*) None. They're worth next to nothing these days anyway. Do you have any? Let me check.
- TA. (*Quickly*) Keep away! Don't touch me! I'm untouchable. (*Mock shooting*) Bang! Bang! (*Takes out a coin from one of her pockets*) Here's a coin.

- RUA. Just as I thought.
- TA. What did you think?
- RUA. *(Pause)* Let's ask the audience. Where does this man's coin come from?
- TA. Woman!
- RUA. *(Confused/distracted)* Of course. Woman . . . What was the question?
- TA. Heads or Tails?
- RUA. Heads of course. Heads are better than tails.
- TA. I said Heads first.
- RUA. No you didn't.
- TA. I said Heads or Tails.
- RUA. Yes, and I said Heads.
- TA. Yes, and I said Heads first.
- RUA. If you don't give me Heads I shall appeal to the audience.
- TA. Please don't. You'll wake them up. Heads for you, and Tails for me. If you win, you may carry this burden. But I'm warning you, it's too heavy for shoulders without muscles.
- RUA. I intend to carry it on my head.
- TA. What?
- RUA. Never mind.
- TA. Ready?
- RUA. Are you planning to toss the coin yourself?
- TA. Of course, I'm in control, aren't I?
- RUA. But the rules.
- TA. All right. I agree.
- RUA. There's a spirit of generosity in you.

TA. Thank you. I knew it was obvious. I'll go even further. Let both of us hold the coin, a symbol of mutual respect for each other's obsessions.

RUA. How noble! I shall always be indebted to you, sir.

(They clasp their hands together with the coin in the middle. They shout "ta, rua, folu" and then toss the coin in the air. It lands on the floor and both run to see)

RUA. It's Heads.

TA. So it is.

(Ta roars like a wild animal. Rua eats greedily. Ta climbs onto the bench)

TA. I am naturally disappointed but I congratulate you on your success. Good luck with the burden!

(Rua picks up the basket and carries it the way Ta used to. Rua is surprised at how heavy it is but forces a smile. Music is heard as ghost-like figures appear and surround Rua in a war-like dance. Ta, who has retreated to the other side of the stage, watches Rua through binoculars [using her hands for this purpose]. The dance should consist of figures wearing bright contrasting costumes and rather ghost-like. The figures should dance as though they were reporters after a scoop. The music should be full of dissonance as the dancers merge and threaten each other in a kaleidoscope of colour. The dancers disappear as the music ends and Ta and Rua are left alone on stage. They stare at each other)

RUA. Why didn't you stop them. I was frightened. Didn't you see how they surrounded me? You've got to support me. Speak. *(Silence)* If you're not talking, then I'm leaving, and I'm taking this basket with me.

TA. No. No. You can't take that. You may go anywhere you like, but you can't take that with you.

RUA. Help me then. I need your support.

TA. The coin has made its decision. It doesn't want me anymore. I have been rejected.

RUA. Please, just a reassuring word from you. *(Silence)* Please, help. Help, you swine!

TA. You've insulted me. Apologise!

RUA. Help me!

TA. Apologise! I feel deeply wounded. I'm offended. How could you. . . .

RUA. Please . . . I need your protection.

TA. Apologise!

(In fury, Ta tackles Rua and they fall to the ground. They struggle for a while until they collapse with exhaustion. Ta is the first to stand up. Ta throws the coin away)

TA. I object to the use of the coin.

RUA. But it's fair.

TA. A coin is foreign.

RUA. But it's just.

TA. Rubbish.

RUA. What?

TA. I said rubbish. Use something local, otherwise my gods shall take revenge.

RUA. But a coin is the fairest means. It's just!

TA. DON'T SAY THAT WORD AGAIN!

RUA. *(Cowering)* Sorry, chief. *(Silence)* What's that? Listen.

(The sound of someone in pain offstage. The sound gets louder and finally a figure [Folu], bruised and sickly looking, appears. Ta doesn't see the figure until after his next speech)

TA. Oh come all ye spirits. Alight on me. Lead me all the way. Left, right, left, right . . .

(Ta marches for a while. Ta sees Folu and runs to Rua. They huddle in a corner and listen)

FOLU. Hello. *(Reaches out for a handshake but there is no response)* I've been looking for the two of you everywhere. I was wor-

ried about you. (*Ta and Rua retreat further*) Don't you recognise me?

TA & RUA. Who are you?

FOLU. What do you mean? You ran away and left me. But I followed, then I heard arguing and . . . here I am. Aren't you glad to see me?

TA & RUA. No, go away. There isn't enough food here for everyone.

FOLU. Food? But I don't want food.

TA & RUA. Liar!

FOLU. I have a message for the two of you.

TA & RUA. (*Blocking their ears*) We don't want to hear it.

FOLU. But you need me. (*Silence*) Can we be friends at least?

TA & RUA. We don't want friendship. Not with strangers anyway.

FOLU. But we used to live together.

TA & RUA. Liar! What is your name?

FOLU. I don't have a name. I'm just a voice. (*Ta and Rua act as though struck*) So you still remember me?

TA & RUA. No. Go away!

FOLU. Please, listen!

TA & RUA. Our ears are closed. We can't hear you.

FOLU. (*Shouting*) Can you hear me now?

TA & RUA. Hardly . . . your voice is faint . . . faint.

FOLU. (*Shouting*) Please listen to me. I have come with a message. It's the same message. (*Pause*) Look after each other!

(*Screaming, Ta and Rua chase Folu, who hastily exits*)

TA. I'm hungry. Give me some food.

RUA. You'll have to win.

TA. I'm getting old and tired. I have no energy left for the struggle.

- RUA. Too bad. You'll have to starve.
(*Ta walks over and tries to snatch the basket*)
- RUA. The rules. You've got to think of the rules.
- TA. I don't care about the rules! I was here first.
- RUA. But I'm in control. I won through fair and just means.
- TA. (*Getting more menacing*) Give me the basket!
- RUA. No, it's mine.
- TA. I want the basket!
- RUA. I'm in control. If you touch me, I shall appeal to the audience.
(*To the audience*) Didn't I win this basket through fair and just means? Didn't I? Didn't I?
- TA. (*To the audience*) I was here first!
(*Pause. Silence*)
- TA. Let's toss the coin again.
- RUA. Until we get it right? No.
- TA. To hell with the coin!
- RUA. But the rules, it's all we have left. No rules, no justice.
- TA. DON'T SAY THAT WORD AGAIN! I'LL KILL YOU IF YOU SAY THAT WORD AGAIN!
- RUA. It's our only hope.
- TA. There's no hope . . . for you!
- RUA. (*Pause. Suddenly the truth dawns on Rua*) Then I've been misled. I've been misled. (*Rua trembles in fear*) I . . . I . . . Will you hold the basket for a while? I have to . . . (*Rua indicates she wants to throw up*)
- TA. (*Patriotically*) If I can help, I'm ready!
- RUA. Thank you.
(*Rua hands over the basket and turns her back to the audience. She clutches her stomach in agony*)

TA. *(Making a speech)* If my help is needed at a time of crisis, I shall give it. How can I stand idly and watch while my sister . . .

(Ta suddenly jumps on top of Rua. They struggle, with the basket left alone at centre stage. During the struggle, a monster appears and heads towards the basket. The monster should look enormous, ugly, multi-coloured and horrible! When Ta and Rua realise that their lives are in danger, they forget their differences and attack the monster. After a lot of struggle, the monster is killed. Exhausted, Ta and Rua stare at each other as a transformation comes over them. Their bodies relax, the frowns disappear to be replaced by radiant faces.)

RUA. We've killed the monster!

TA. I feel different.

RUA. Something's changed in me. I don't understand.

TA. Neither do I. *(Pause)* We have killed the monster!

(They look at each other fondly and shake hands. Then they pick up the basket of food, place it between them and feed each other)

* * * * *

Interview with Vilsoni Hereniko

The Monster was written and directed by Vilsoni Hereniko, then a lecturer in drama and theater at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. It was first performed at the University of the South Pacific in October 1987, a few weeks after the second coup in September. Rehearsals began soon after the first coup, in preparation for the university's annual Pacific Week program, which was canceled later, partly because of disruptions on campus due to the involvement of academics in Fiji politics and the military's interference with campus facilities. The performance of this play, however, went ahead amidst a climate of fear, intimidation, and decrees designed to stifle creativity and freedom of expression.

Because of the timing and prevailing circumstances, *The Monster* was seen by many as a satire on the military takeover and those involved in its execution.

Below is an interview with the playwright/director about his play and his views on the relationship between theater and politics.

Pacific Studies: Why did you choose to write a play rather than a letter or a poem, or use some other genre that doesn't require a performance?

Hereniko: A play is multidimensional and doesn't have some of the constraints that beset the other forms. Let me explain. After my colleagues at the University of the South Pacific had sufficiently recovered from the shock of the first coup in Fiji in 1987, some of them started making public statements about what they felt the coup was about, whether they were for or against it, who they felt were behind the events of May fourteenth and so on. All of a sudden, academics felt they had to take sides and make clear their political affiliation. It was no longer okay to sit on the fence; if you were in favor of the coup, then you were anti-Indian, if you thought the coup was wrong, then you were denying Fijians their indigenous rights. As a Rotuman playwright living in Fiji, these two opposing positions seemed misguided. It was too simplistic to think merely in terms of one race against another; it seemed more a question of quests for control and power. Yes, race may have had something to do with it, but it was just one of the many factors at play. Who knows, perhaps it was just a mask worn to hide more private and personal ambitions. My main concern, however, was what the coup was doing to ordinary people, who, through no fault of their own, suddenly found themselves without an income or means of survival. The situation was complex, and a letter to the editor would have been inadequate to express and capture the ambiguities, contradictions, and fears that people were experiencing. But theater can convey complex emotions more efficiently than any other medium I know, except perhaps film. Theater can replicate life; it can bring to the fore what is hidden in the depths of the human heart; it can objectify reality so that we recognize ourselves and our secret fears and desires as the play unfolds. Because *The Monster* is not concerned with accurate historical representation but rather with exploring an analogous human conflict, the viewer is seduced into becoming emotionally involved with the action on stage. The fight between Ta and Rua becomes the individual's own struggle with the opposition, whatever it may be. The struggle on stage becomes the prototype for other kinds of struggles for power, between individuals, between different political parties, between governments, between good and evil.

A play in performance can do a lot of things that are impossible for

other media. Live theater is real people engaged in make-believe conflicts, and the resolution of such conflicts becomes just as engaging as conflicts in our lives. For me, writing a play is a more satisfactory way of exploring a complex issue than a letter to the editor, which, by the way, seemed to be the chosen medium for a number of political activists, who soon found themselves hounded by the military. Some were thrown in prison for a few days. By opting for a work of art, I was able to say what I wanted to say and get away with it.

There are some parts of the script that are quite explicit. Ta's comment that she has been rejected, for example, is reminiscent of Ratu Mara's response after he had lost the 1987 election; Rua's insistence on following the rules echoes the sentiments of a lot of Indians who felt that the country would go to the dogs otherwise. In some ways, The Monster seems clearly inspired by the coup. So why were you spared?

I don't really know. Suffice it to say that my colleagues were surprised that I was not arrested, for reasons best known to those in power at the time. I was told by friends that several army men in plain clothes were present during some of the performances, but they probably didn't connect what was happening on stage with the coup. That might have been the case, since the play was not performed in a naturalistic style, and the cast was all women, so perhaps they thought the play couldn't have been about power-hungry men! Theater, as a medium for raising people's consciousness, or as a potential threat to the status quo, is something that is new to the contemporary Pacific. I suppose if the government had been aware of the political nature of theater in places such as Kenya and Latin America they would have arrested me. But there has been no precedent in the South Pacific, nothing that would make politicians suspicious of theater.

Also, if I had been arrested, it would have been difficult for my detractors to know what to charge me with. Perhaps they could have charged the cast and me for working on a Sunday, for the Sunday ban was in operation at this time and we ignored it for our first performance. If they were against the contents of the play, they would have had a hard time identifying which aspects of the play offended them. The symbolic nature of the play, the all-female cast, the ambiguities and contradictions, the seemingly nonsensical dialogue at times, all these meant that the play was open to several interpretations. Some people thought the play was pro-Labour or Coalition; some thought it was pro-Alliance. Those religiously inclined saw it as having a message

of love for one another, that the monster was the personification of evil in the human heart. Only when this monster has been killed can we be free to love our enemies. A few saw the monster as Rabuka himself; others saw it as multinational corporations, dominant foreign powers or the CIA. In fact, a plus of working in a symbolic mode is that a lot more interpretations are possible and you end up with a much richer product. You can conceal as much as you reveal, and in times of danger, this was necessary for self-preservation. I have a wife and son who wanted me at home, not locked up in a cell in Suva prison or police station.

A possible reason, of course, is that the army knew what was going on but regarded the exercise as harmless and insignificant. We were performing at the University of the South Pacific rather than on the street. There were no newspapers at the time, no radio, and there were security checks at strategic places. Although we had full houses and four performances, our influence was limited; besides, we could hardly be accused of inciting anyone to violence. The ending of the play makes up for any possible offensive allusions in the beginning.

Yes, the ending seems so idealistic and preachy, so different from the never-ending struggle for power that still dominates Fiji politics.

That's right. It is futile to wallow in the mud; the artist has a responsibility to draw attention to the blue sky as well. At the end of one of our performances a colleague, who had suffered at the hands of the army and who was constantly harassed long after the play performances, took me to task for having the monster in the play killed. For him, I had presented an ideal world. He saw the monster as representing Rabuka, who was still very much alive and kicking. My play therefore had presented a false view of reality. But his view was typical of those who think the theater is nothing but a mirror. For me, the theater should do more than merely reflect reality. The theater has to be larger than life; it must aspire to improve the human condition, to act as a pointer to other paths that might lead to harmony, otherwise, why should anyone go to the theater? One can go to the street or the market to see drama, some of which is more dramatic than theater could possibly portray.

However, having said that theater should aim to present alternate realities, I must also say that at the time the play was performed the ending seemed necessary, particularly when the situation in Fiji seemed hopeless. There was a vacuum of information and the general public had no idea what was happening. Fear and anxiety were rampant. Much better to keep people informed than to keep them in the dark.

The vacuum encourages the imagination to concoct all kinds of negative possibilities; thus it was necessary for the play to offer a glimmer of hope. Now, in 1992, I'm not quite sure that I would end it in the same way, if I were writing it today. Somehow, that ending seems contrived and didactic.

Is it wrong to be didactic?

Not necessarily. A lot of Shakespeare and Ibsen is didactic. But the lesson has to evolve naturally from the action, so that it comes across as the most logical outcome, given the development of events. Rereading the play, it is plausible that once the monster has been killed, Ta and Rua would resume their struggle against one another, for there is no longer the threat of an external power. Okay, I chose to have the death of the monster result in changed hearts for Ta and Rua, but this isn't the most logical choice of action, except perhaps from a religious interpretation of what the monster represents.

What then does the monster represent?

The monster for each of us may be different. The monster is that which we all need to subdue in order to find harmony with each other. You see, though the Fiji coup inspired the final shape of the play, the play itself existed several years before the Fiji coup. I first wrote it as a play about beggars eating out of a rubbish bin. When they came to the last dregs, they realized that to survive they might have to eat each other. In another version, a garbage truck arrived and removed the rubbish bin, taking away their only source of livelihood. The earlier versions were never satisfactory to me, because they were written in a vacuum, and though I knew it was a play about the human struggle for survival, it was vague and dissipated. As soon as the coup took place, I realized straight away what this play, which I had titled "Tom, Dick, and Harry," was really about: Power. But the play was meant to travel beyond the confines of the Fiji situation. It was intended to be about the constant struggle for supremacy everywhere, what happens to individuals who are trapped in this power struggle, and what needs to happen if there is to be sharing of power, as symbolized by Ta and Rua feeding each other at the end of the play.

So the play is not a satire on Fiji politics?

Oh yes, it is. You see, in performance, Ta (meaning “First” in Rotuman) was played by a Fijian woman, Rua (meaning “Second”) by an Indian, so it is easy for a Fiji audience to see it in terms of Fiji politics. Also, some of the incidents in the play allude to specific events prior to the coup, and so a Fiji audience is bound to interpret the play from a Fiji perspective. But the script doesn’t mention anything about specific races. If the play were to be performed in Hawai’i, with Ta played by a native Hawaiian and Rua by a *haole*, an audience of University of Hawai’i faculty and students is bound to see the play in a different light. If one of the actors were male and the other female, others may see it as a power struggle between the sexes. In fact, when I wrote the play I wanted a man and a woman, but because I couldn’t find a male actor I ended up casting two females. I lost a layer of interpretation, but this change helped conceal some of the specific references to male-dominated Fiji politics. Also, because the two females were dressed as males, wearing complementary colors of blue and pink, the characters took on both male and female characteristics. They became generic and “sexless.” This again is one of the strengths of theater—its ability to communicate so many different things simultaneously, through color, sound, costume, gesture, movement, lighting, and all the other elements that combine to make theater a powerful medium for communicating complex emotions.

And yet The Monster is a very simple play.

Yes. The complexity is conflated, condensed in imagery and symbolism. It looks deceptively simple as a text, but when it is performed and you have real people who look, move, talk, act differently from each other, the play takes on a three-dimensional character. Also, objects such as the coconut seedling (symbol of the Labour party) and the wheel (symbol of the Alliance party) evoked all kinds of associations in the audience. The sight of these symbolic objects mistreated on stage forces the audience to react; the play, like the dead Lazarus, is raised to life and demands our response. Thus, when Rua wins control over the basket and Ta threatens to forcibly regain possession and Rua confronts the audience and asks, “Didn’t I win through fair and just means? Didn’t I?”—someone from the audience shouted back “Yes!” while another responded “No!” These reactions from the audience are missing from the text; so is the life of the play. A play has to be performed for its full impact to be realized. Yes, you can read a play and gain something from

it, but for a fuller understanding of what the playwright intended, you really have to see, hear, and sometimes smell it. One of the wonderful things about theater is that the audience's response is immediate, and if the play works, you can tell straightaway. If it doesn't, people walk out and you have half-empty houses for the rest of the season.

How did the audience respond to your play then?

There is a videotape of one of the performances, and, every time I show it, I realize how responsive Fiji audiences are. You can hear them laughing as the actors pull each other's hair and fall on the ground with a thud. Sometimes they shout back or whistle. Because of the symbolic nature of the play, I was worried that the audience would fall asleep. Thus in the text, when Rua threatens to appeal to the audience, Ta responds, "Don't, you'll wake them up!" During performance, this line didn't make sense, since the audience was always wide awake. But I had it there when I was writing it because I thought this line might wake up the sleepy ones. With only two characters on stage, it is often difficult to hold the attention of the audience. Fortunately, the two lead characters were able to carry it off, although they had had little acting experience.

A woman whose son was under constant surveillance by the army and whose house was fire-bombed told me that she cried throughout the performance. Though she didn't live on campus, she heard about the play and drove down to see it, only to have her car stopped and checked by the army's security guards.

I had a few letters afterwards, and lots of verbal thank-yous from people who felt that the play spoke loudly and clearly about the Fiji situation. Obviously, these were people who endorsed the message that the two races should start cooperating and working together, rather than be at odds with each other all the time. The Christians, of course, found the ending very appealing. Those who were anticoup thought the play was an attack on Rabuka and Ratu Mara and that I should take it to the street, even to Australia, to gather support for their cause. I had a request from some colleagues to allow them to perform the play at Sukuna Park during an anticoup demonstration on 14 May 1988. Though I agreed initially from an artistic standpoint, my wife foresaw that the demonstrators at Sukuna Park would probably be arrested and thrown in prison, as indeed they were. Had they performed my play, I probably would also have been arrested upon my return from an over-

seas trip and my family harassed by the army meanwhile. I withdrew permission.

But why?

Because *The Monster* would have been used as a political weapon to lash out at the enemy, and would have taken on a more extreme partisan character than I could identify with. The actors would necessarily have drawn attention to themselves (they were all fairly well known for their anticoup positions) and their favorite parts of the play, at the expense of the play as a work of art. The overriding message would have been lost, for the actors were unlikely to give priority to their responsibility as actors/artists. Rather, they were political activists first and foremost, and there is a world of difference.

You are not a political activist then?

I am an artist first and foremost. At a time of political crisis, I felt moved to use my art (theater) in the hope that I could contribute to the finding of a satisfactory solution. I see art as having an important role to play in mediation and in drawing attention to other ways of being. But I am wary of power, and of people who aspire to positions of power. I can only wish such people good luck and hope they never become corrupt, like many politicians and military leaders before them. My role as an artist is to warn them of pitfalls and to remind them of the responsibilities they take on when they assume power. It is not my role to discredit anyone so that my friends or myself can get into power. This is why I am not primarily a political activist, and why art should not be used in this way—otherwise it becomes propaganda.

COMIC THEATER IN SAMOA AS INDIGENOUS MEDIA

Caroline Sinavaiana
University of Hawai'i

Through media like that of play, society is enabled to comment to itself about its own routine conditions of existence, their values and their contradictions. . . . Following Bateson (1972), the epistemological assumption here is that all of the *information which a viable social unit requires for its survival* is not communicated through everyday, routine channels of information-transmission. Instead, such information may be communicated through the reality and *media of myth, ritual, art, dance, music*, and so forth. *Play* is one such medium which carries reflective messages to the self.

—Don Handelman, 1982 (emphasis added)

A work of art is a crossroads; the number of paths that meet in it seems to me to be closely related to the work's artistic value.

—Milan Kundera, 1991

As a poet and storyteller of Samoan-American descent, I see my own work as being essentially about convergences. Art, politics, culture, history: mapping the crossroads where those paths intersect in my own metaphysical backyard is one version of the story I tell myself about what it is that I actually *do* for a living. With complete sympathy for *Homo erectus*, Richard Pryor's primordial "dude" (black, of course) arising from the primal muck, for the first time standing upright to have a look around—I scratch my head and ponder the ancient questions: Who am I? Where am I? and How do I get to Detroit?

The process of posing such elemental questions has led me, by a number of back roads and disreputable cowpaths, to the present inquiry. As in Borges's marvelous story, "Garden of the Forking Paths," each track has continued opening onto yet another, years passing in the meanwhile, until the present moment when I find myself sitting at a desk in Samoa thinking about traditional folk comedies. In *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin (1968) lyrically traces the polyphonous chorus of folk humor along its carnivalesque romp through the thicket of medieval European church and state. Victor Turner (1982) explores the multivocality of African Ndembu ritual and performance. Bradd Shore (1977) recounts a hilarious parody of Prince Philip's visit to Samoa forever memorialized by a couple of cheeky Samoan clowns. Having prowled down one and another such intriguing avenues of inquiry over the years, I repeatedly find myself emerging at a crossroads and bumping unceremoniously into folk comedy. It is at that now-familiar intersection then, at least in my own tilted geography, where many of the paths in question appear to entwine: where art and politics rub elbows with culture and history, while waiting for the light to change.

There is a saying I have heard more than once about Samoans being the "politicians of the Pacific." A bright young anthropologist from Korea tells me of her abiding appreciation for Pacific islanders, because "they can joke about anything, even serious matters." Epeli Hau'ofa (1988) celebrates this comic gift in an anecdote about Tongans telling funny stories while a hurricane does its best to relieve them of the roof over their heads. As a Pacific islander myself, such observations from perspectives both "outside" and within Oceanic cultures strike a clear chord that resonates with my own experience. It is in a patch of that fertile terrain then, where a confluence of comic art and politics enrich the soils of culture and history, that I would like to linger awhile in this essay.

A notable misconception lurking about is that Pacific islanders have no indigenous tradition of theatrical performance. This uninformed notion has recently been dismantled and formally corrected by Vilsoni Hereniko (1990) in his doctoral thesis on the subject. A gifted clown himself (and distinguished playwright to boot), Hereniko ably demonstrates and documents the present vitality of indigenous theater throughout the insular Pacific. Like contemporary theater anywhere in the world, Pacific regional theater is essentially rooted in traditional forms of dramatic performance, including ritual and farce. And, as Hereniko points out in this volume and elsewhere, the link between politics and theater is intrinsic.

Why Comedy?

A case in point is traditional Samoan comedy.¹ While Samoan culture abounds with various types of comic presentations, most of which are expressed in song and dance, this essay will showcase *fale aitu* (literally, house of spirits), as the most formalized of the humorous performance genres. These satirical sketches serve a variety of purposes in Samoan society. Entertainment and play, informal vehicles of social control and ritual perhaps—their dimensions are manifold, but those are other stories for other times. What I would like to explore here are certain particular ways in which the sketches serve as modes of communication, which hum with political undertones, in contemporary Samoan society. My intention in this essay is to inquire and reflect, rather than to assert or contend. I therefore invoke the postmodern spirit of *bricolage* in serving up this pastiche of echoes and giggles. For, as Barbara Babcock points out, the “oldest forms of literary criticism were the dialogue and the *satura*. The Roman *satura* (a plate of mixed fruit) was the traditional vehicle for literary as well as social criticism and consisted of a mixture of genres, prose, and verse, and inversive parodies. It is from this as well as the word *satyr* that *satire* derives” (1984:105).

An apocryphal definition of theater as a “community talking to itself about itself” may serve at the outset as a useful conceptual frame for our discussion. This idea posits two key suppositions about theater in general: (1) that theater is in fact a form of communication—something is being communicated by the playwright and players to the audience; and (2) that that same “something” is being communicated by the playwright and players to themselves, in the process of making theater. In a social/psychological sense, we might describe this same process as a dialogue between self and other. The players are self; the audience is other. However, since together both groups make up the larger community, we might from that larger perspective say that what we have here is the community talking to itself, so to speak.

In order to gain a singular degree of understanding about any human community, one does well to consider its theater and to pose three apparently simple questions. What is being said? Why? And, What difference does it make? In the spirit of that claim, I undertake now to address those questions to traditional Samoan comedy as practiced today. I will suggest that, generally speaking, *fale aitu* represents a particular type of communication that functions, among other things, to help bridge a historical gap between a cultural past and present, a cultural self and other. But first, a brief introduction to the form itself.

Into the Fun-House of Culture

Fale aitu are satirical sketches that commonly serve as interludes between sets of songs and dances in a traditional program of entertainment or "concert" (*koniseti*) among Samoans. Improvisation plays a major role in the performance of these skits, which are orally composed, rehearsed, and presented by a small troupe of amateur actors.² These comics, usually younger untitled men,³ are informally trained by an older, more experienced comedian who often composes and directs the skits as well. Caricature, hyperbole, and satire characterize plots that often turn on the ridicule of authority figures. In the sketches, normative status roles are reversed: the high are made low and the world momentarily "turned upside down," as found in carnival traditions elsewhere.

Performances generally occur at night, outdoors on the village green, unless rain drives the festivities under cover in the communal meeting-house. Produced by one or more village organizations to raise funds for local projects, the concerts consist of songs and dances drawn from both traditional and contemporary repertoires. Following every four or five numbers, the comedians take the floor with some irreverent sketch that charges the air with gleeful hooting and howling laughter from the audience. Performers' families and friends show public support by approaching the performance area with donations after their kin's act.

In addition to the village context, an entire performing group may travel to other villages, islands, and countries nowadays to raise money for church, school, and other village needs. In recent years, one of the most popular features of independence celebrations in Western Samoa is a national *fale aitu* contest. Radio and television crews from Western and American Samoa regularly tape these performances for broadcast to enthusiastic audiences during the rest of the year.⁴

Many of the earliest accounts of Samoan culture contain descriptions of formal traveling parties (*malaga*), which often featured extravagant concerts including the popular clown shows. Such elaborate visiting parties were frequently mounted for the purpose of negotiating the marriage of chiefly offspring, or otherwise establishing political alliances. Thus, a frequent and important performance context for the *fale aitu* was such explicitly political occasions. In the modern context of the traveling party cum benefit concert, that political interest has become more implicit perhaps, although still very much alive in the form of reciprocal exchange of hospitality and resources. And, as always, marital and other important alliances may well be forged on such occasions.

As might be expected in a society where values of decorum and rank reign supreme, the dynamics of hierarchical relations typically comprise a major theme in the sketches. Thus, the performances discussed below are considered in the cultural context that informs their meaning and relevance for Samoans. (Working titles are my own; otherwise skits are untitled.)

"Mr. Reagan"

Sometimes, political themes in the sketches are explicitly drawn through the parody of particular figures. In 1987, for example, "Mr. Ronald Reagan" was featured in a skit performed by a traveling party from Western Samoa to New Zealand, the adopted home of a sizeable Samoan community. Essentially, the piece presented Reagan, "the man running America and Germany," as an inarticulate dolt, whose halting gibberish is gaily and hilariously mistranslated by a smooth-talking "interpreter."

Interpreter: And now we'll try to explain and tell you all about the progress of these two countries. I'm going to translate into Samoan what he has to say for he is a true American born at Solosolo village!

Reagan: I want to speak. What do you mean? Just fine—

Interpreter: His excellency is happy, because he was escorted here by government motorcycles. And now he wants a bottle of Rum X. . . . It is difficult for him, the situation as it is now. The cost of living is extra high! . . . this must be blamed on his administration. He says our country must try to be self-reliant!

. . .

The prevailing joke here turns on the caricature of an important political figure. By initially neutralizing the mystique of the famous visitor through the claim that he is Samoan-born, the comics in effect appropriate this symbolic other into a familiar context where his status can then be reinscribed according to local standards. Then there is the double-edged parody that mimics Reagan's halting speech on the one hand and insults him on the other, through mistranslation. The total effect of the comic treatment is to reverse the status of dignitary and subordinates. In the classic mode of folk comedy, we witness the high being made low, however momentarily, on the stage.

In the early 1970s, what may be a prototype for this sketch was performed, satirizing the visit of Britain's Prince Philip to Western Samoa. In Shore's perceptive account (1977), we see the royal visitor being lampooned in a similar fashion by a combination of mimicry, hilarious mis-translation, and insulting commentary about the royal personage. A significant footnote from that "clown show," in Shore's term, concerns a particular phrase, "people's nation" (*malo pipo*), extravagantly repeated by the prince in his speech. The phrase surfaces as a kind of centerpiece in a later sketch, discussed below; moreover, it has now passed into the vernacular to connote the clownish, impotent dialogue of posturing officials or any other foolhardy group: a kind of wry Samoan equivalent of Shakespeare's adage, "much ado about nothing."

"The People's Government (or Nation)"

The "people's nation" could well be the inspiration for the later, more well-known skit, this one featuring an extended debate in the Samoan parliament, whose illustrious members are portrayed as various parts of a human body.⁵ The issue at hand is a concerted effort by various members to eject a colleague, Stomach, for his troublesome behavior. Forehead complains that he suffers "a lot each day . . . I think hard all the time trying to find where to secure some food for this guy, Stomach. And here and now I propose that Stomach be removed from the nation." The two female members, Teeth and Nose, likewise declare their disgust at all they have to ingest and inhale to please "this guy Stomach," a "useless" character who does little more than "sit and lie around." Ear and Eyes are also fed up with Stomach's demand for eternal vigilance in the quest for the next meal. After Eyes points out some prominent examples of the culprit seated in the audience, the group decides on clemency: instead of removal, they will simply stop the food supply. When someone notices that the legs have ceased to function, alarm spreads, and the body decides to reconsider.

The sketch is essentially a parody of the Samoan parliament in which bombast and empty rhetoric are thought by many to be all too common, especially with the recent practice of broadcasting legislative sessions on national radio. When interviewed, several consultants, especially among the Western-educated Samoans in the capital, wryly dismissed the ludicrous posturing of certain parliamentary leaders as self-serving at best. Such discomfort among the electorate with the public presentations of legislators can be understood on one level as a kind of "con/fusion" between two essentially distinct forms of political

organization. In the parliamentary structure, on the one hand, we have a Western notion of centralized governance and nationhood. In the traditional chiefly system, on the other, we have an indigenous practice based on decentralized, situationally aligned clan groups. One way of reading the skit as political text is to take the parliament as factional body politic writ small. When the individual members finally acknowledge that they simply cannot exist without Stomach, the necessity for acting on behalf of the “common good” can be realized. In a sense, the plot recapitulates a conceptual shift, however reluctant and tricky, from provincialism to nationalism. Here, comic energy lies in the difficulty and tensions of such a shift, the lurching process of adjusting to another way of being in one’s self and in relation to others.

Although there are notable similarities between this sketch and the foregoing ones targeting particular individuals, here the comic “spotlight” appears to shift somewhat from the individual to the systemic. In the neocolonial context of Samoa at the present time, a compelling issue is the matter of negotiating a social landscape whose cultural, political, and ethical boundaries have become ambiguous, contested territory. As Western cultural systems continue to permeate the soil of social life in Samoa, countless points of cross-cultural difference and tension continually crop up. Basic institutions—politics, medicine, education, religion, economics—appear as weird clumps of stunted, misshapen growths jutting from the altered ground. Comic sketches highlight the cracks and fissures of that social topography with satire and wit: the artful pun, a well-placed twitch, a Samoan Elvis singing about the sorry sight of Christian ministers squabbling over the most prestigious cuts of roast pig. Tectonic plates of social order have shifted beneath our feet; and traditional comedy is a plank bridge flung across the rifts and faultlines of that only half-familiar terrain.

While the performances noted above feature politics in the leading role, more often than not political themes simply (and perpetually) lurk in the wings. In fact, the essence of *fale aitu* is political, its very fabric being woven from the fibers of social commentary. Another recent sketch illustrates the more characteristic voice of folk comedy, with its shadowy inflections and bawdy chorus laying down a steady undertone of social critique.⁶ The scene takes place in a Western-style medical clinic for postnatal mothers and their infants, where several “women” and their new “babies” (played by coltish, pubescent boys) await their turn with the doctor. The story basically turns on the abusive “bedside manner” of the autocratic doctor, which eventually inspires a minor rebellion among the disaffected mothers.

"Nursing Mothers"

Between interviews with each mother, doctor and nurse sing a chorus pointing out that the doctor is present "to inspect the children and see whether the parents have obeyed his orders concerning their health." One mother, Mrs. Onion, describes her baby's symptoms as headache, "dizzy feet," and "things growing all over the body." The doctor retorts:

You know why this happens? It's because you spend all your time gossiping from one family to another, leaving the baby alone where he eats stale coconuts. . . . So the thing to do is for you to get coconut wood to scrape the baby's body once in the mornings and once in the evenings daily.

The next mother, Mrs. Brick, reports that her daughter was born with a "very thin stomach." After establishing that the infant's stomach sounds like a chainsaw and that she has malnutrition, the doctor stoutly announces his prescription: three teaspoonfuls of "weed killer chemical" each day. Two more medical consultations follow in the same vein, with one remedy calling for the use of a wooden axe handle, and another using dirt as an ointment. By this time, the disgruntled mothers have begun to threaten the doctor with a dose of his own medicine, and the piece hurriedly ends (presumably sidestepping a rout) with a final duet by doctor and nurse. Their song blames parental neglect as the cause of their children's illnesses and exhorts parents to "wake up" and join the medical team as "soldiers of the nation of Christ, so the children may live healthily!"

While the mothers' lack of sophistication is gently caricaturized, the real satirical ammunition is leveled at the doctor and his brutal inanities. He is epitomized as arrogant, bullying, and ignorant—a figure whose ludicrous prescriptions are anything but therapeutic. Here, ironic inversion has him dispensing poison and violence instead of healing. Another level of comic reversal is articulated through the mothers' sarcastic retorts to the doctor. On being advised to "stroke" her child's head with an axe handle, one mother angrily replies, "What do you think, this is a breadfruit? You stupid! This is not a breadfruit!" When another mother is told to anoint her child with dirt, she retaliates, "How about if I bring dirt to rub you with?" In the context of social convention, the reversal is one of status in which the normative deference owed to doctors is turned to scorn by the angry women. Here, the high social status customarily enjoyed by medical professionals is under-

cut by the doctor's idiotic pretensions. In the classic mode of *fale aitu*, precisely such pretension and hypocrisy are the ultimate targets of ridicule.

A better-known sketch with a similar theme presents a parody of a surgical operation performed with carpentry tools, a large saw and hammer in place of scalpel and anesthetic.⁷ The piece, performed in the mid-1970s, employs similar comic techniques of slapstick, exaggeration, and reversal to achieve a burlesque of Western-style medical care. The patient's family attempt to intervene in the alarming procedure and are forcibly subdued by the surly medical team. Comic tension arises from the stark contrast of traditional and Western healing methods implicit in the satire. Where the former is more modestly marked by intimacy, massage, and active family participation, the latter touts its technological sophistication: members of the medical team appear to be hermetically sealed by mask, gown, gloves, and hauteur; they are safely distanced from the patient's family, who by contrast are portrayed as unruly, uncouth specimens. Here also, satire inverts normative status roles; the mocking of the medical team's skill and technological superiority turns political advantage on its head, however momentarily. They are portrayed as inhuman: automatons disguised as healers.

Why Satire?

As communication of a singular nature, the comedies publicly express collective concerns in a manner not possible in any other traditional medium (with the exception of one song form). Tensions inherent in hierarchical relations can be aired publicly through clowning and thus conveyed in a nonthreatening fashion to authority figures by the vehicle of folk comedy. From the sketches discussed here, for example, one might accurately infer a certain ambivalence or disaffection with the status quo. Many people are acutely dissatisfied with the self-serving, arbitrary exercise of power demonstrated by certain government officials; people are not entirely happy with the treatment they receive in neocolonial hospitals. These tensions, however, are traditionally denied direct expression and resolution by a powerful cultural sanction prescribing deference to authority. Such social criticism, then, must seek expression elsewhere: in satire, for example, a medium uniquely suited to the task, cloaking protest as it does with humor. Admittedly, such a transmission of information is largely implicit in nature: its modality is that of the proverb or folktale. Among other delights, it offers a "word to the wise."

Oblique as it can be as communication, however, traditional comedy has managed to survive into the complexities of this century. In the modern context of Samoa's colonial history, for example, traditional equations governing hierarchical relationships, among others, have been profoundly complicated by the imposition of a foreign cultural matrix onto the indigenous one. Now what we have is the grid of Western cultural and political authority overlaid onto the traditional social structure. Instead of one "boss," in a sense we have two. In the mere 150 years since Christian missionaries introduced writing into a culture several thousand years old, Samoa has been force-fed the fruits of the entire history of Western technological development. From the oral tradition to computers, from outrigger canoes to 747s, the sheer volume and speed of change is itself phenomenal. And with the overwhelming proliferation of cultural values and practices from the West since colonization, it is difficult to maintain a balanced perspective of potential benefits versus disadvantages arising from the emerging order. In the face of such rapid and bewildering changes in the social landscape, one can certainly imagine the challenge of articulating a discomfort that begins to feel both inevitable and overwhelming at the same time. The comedies then, provide a platform and vehicle by which such amorphous but pervasive concerns can be expressed with impunity to the powers-that-be.

That impunity, the unbridled license of the clown, derives from the conceptual framework of comedy, which communicates the metamesage (in Bateson's term [1972]) that "this is only play" or "I am only joking." This protective frame operates somewhat like a permeable membrane, in which two organic systems are both separated and connected at the same time. The past, a traditional culture, customary values, a familiar self are bounded and thus distinguished; they are declared, reinforced, and valued in contradistinction with the present, with a hybridized culture, eclectic and often opposing values, and a nonfamiliar self or other. Samoan comedy then, is like a cultural membrane—bounding, separating, negotiating differences. Like traditional clowning aesthetics elsewhere, it is an attempt, in Barbara Babcock's words, "to translate and interpret between worlds and to establish a dialogue between the knowns and the unknowns, be they present and past, self and other, or science and art" (1982:201).

NOTES

The original data for this essay are based on performances and rehearsals of traditional comedies, personal interviews, and observations recorded over fifteen years, from 1973 to

1988, in several villages of Western Samoa. This research was supported by grants from the East-West Center, the Ford Foundation, Fulbright-Hays Foundation, and facilitated by logistical support from the National University of Samoa and the Department of Rural and Economic Development (Ofisa o le Pulenu'u) of Western Samoa; the Folk Arts Program of the American Samoa Council for Arts, Culture, and Humanities; and residents of 'Upolu, Savai'i, and Tutuila islands.

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A seminal and much abbreviated form of this essay, with the same title, was delivered in 1991 at the Seventeenth Pacific Science Congress in Honolulu, Hawai'i.

1. For purposes of this essay, I use the following terms interchangeably: "clown, comic, comedian" to denote comic actor; and "sketch, skit, comedy, clown show" for *fale aitu*.

2. With rare exceptions, like that of Petelo, Samoa's most famous "comedian" (now living in southern California and performing primarily for Samoan audiences), comics tend to work at ordinary jobs such as farming, fishing, or driving village buses.

3. In general, women do not perform in *fale aitu* in mixed company, although there are occasional exceptions. Elsewhere I discuss this gender difference in more detail (Sinavaiana 1992a, 1992b). In field interviews, a majority of consultants, both male and female, remarked that the dignified status of women made it inappropriate for them to clown in *fale aitu* because of the typically risqué nature of the sketches.

4. While videotaping performances at Western Samoa Flag Day in Apia 1988, I met another Samoan also filming the skits; he reported doing so at the explicit request of his extended family back in Los Angeles.

Another interesting note here is the "metaframing" at work through broadcast of the comedies. To recast a perspective mentioned earlier, we might read this text as a community watching/listening to itself "talking to itself."

5. This version was performed in American Samoa around 1973 by a group of secondary school students from Western Samoa as part of a fund-raising concert for their school. KVZK-TV in Pago Pago filmed the event.

6. I saw this sketch done as a rehearsal in Lalomauga, Western Samoa, in 1988. As usual, the rehearsal drew a small crowd of appreciative onlookers, the occasion for an impromptu social gathering providing a ready-made, informal audience.

7. More detailed description and analysis of that skit, which I call "The Operation," appear elsewhere (Sinavaiana 1992a, 1992b).

THE THEATER OF POLITICS: CONTRASTING TYPES OF PERFORMANCE IN MELANESIA

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In this article I interpret phenomena that have traditionally been considered "religious" in anthropological literature as contrasting types of performance. Specifically, I contrast the *malanggan* of the Tikana people of northern New Ireland with the "Johnson cult" of the Lavongai people of New Hanover.¹ *Malanggan* have commonly been seen as religious ceremonies, which honor the dead but which also function to integrate and sustain society; while the activities of the Lavongai following their vote in 1964 for the American president, Lyndon B. Johnson, called "the Johnson cult" by local authorities, belongs to a category commonly called, by an earlier generation of anthropologists, "cargo cults." Here I examine the *malanggan* ceremony and the Johnson cult as performances that express the aspirations and values of individual Tikana and Lavongai in ways that reflect the respective structures of their societies and styles of their cultures.

The Tikana people of northern New Ireland continue to perform their traditional *malanggan* ceremonies to "finish" the dead: socially, politically, economically, psychologically, and, perhaps, spiritually. These ceremonies have been known for over a century, and there is no reason to suppose that they are not much older. Like religious plays of the Middle Ages, these regularly repeated performances tell of the ancient verities as they tell of contemporary manifestations of them; and, in the telling, recreate and reinforce them. The traditional roles are played by the living as they were once played by the dead, following a script known to the ancestors. While *malanggan* are group affairs par excellence, they are also the stage on which individuals play their parts.

It is *malanggan* around which all power relations in Tikana society are structured, and it is, therefore, *malanggan* in which political leaders seek to find their places of influence.

The Lavongai people of New Hanover are only now relinquishing their roles in "The Election for America," a performance that has run for over twenty-five years, since 1964, without a single repeated scene. Opening when half the Lavongais voted for President Johnson of America to represent them in the newly formed House of Assembly, the action has moved steadily forward, the players creating a long narrative as they interact with each other, with their adversaries in New Hanover, and with the passing parade of government officers (before and after Papua New Guinea became independent in 1975), missionaries, European residents, anthropologists, and others who stray onstage. The improvised theater of the Johnson cult has provided the script within which the men of New Hanover (with the mostly passive acceptance of women) have found their way to various positions of influence on their own stage and on the larger one of the nation from which they still seek independence. While individuals created their own parts and ad-libbed their own lines, they acted responsively to each other and succeeded in achieving, en masse, a great deal of power for their group.

In what follows, I will try to make clear the contrasting uses of theater to form power structures in these two contrasting societies, and to summarize the research findings on which I base these generalizations.²

Tikana and Lavongai: Structure and Culture

The Tikana and the Lavongai peoples occupy neighboring islands, New Ireland and New Hanover, respectively. Both islands lie north of New Guinea and are part of Papua New Guinea. The two groups have much in common with each other and with other Melanesians.

Both the Tikana and the Lavongai live largely in coastal villages of seventy to three hundred people, though there are still a few villages in New Hanover that are a half hour's walk up the mountain. Both peoples live on sweet potatoes, yams, taro, sago, chickens, fish, pigs, and, now, canned foods and rice. In both islands, villages are composites of named hamlets, each associated with one, two, or three clans.

Social Structures

Both the Tikana and the Lavongai have about a dozen named matrilineal clans, of which three to seven dominate in any given village. Here

the similarity between the two societies sharply ends: the Tikana live in matrilineal, matrilocal extended families, whereas the Lavongai live in nuclear families, which are, if possible, settled patrilocally. The Tikana say that nuclear family units may live either at the mother's place or the father's, but nearly all of them who are raising children (and, in any case, a majority in the village) live uxorimatrilocally with their matrilineal kin; and, thus, with clear access to matrilineally controlled land. The Lavongai say that they have always preferred to live in the father's place, and the plurality of them do so. This means that they are settled on land that belongs to a matrilineal clan to which neither the father/husband nor the mother/wife belongs. In the old days, it seems likely that women of a man's father's clan might have been more often selected for marriage, making virilocality consistent with matrilineal clans, but mate selection is a matter of romantic love today. In any case, fragmentation of clans, subclans, and lineages, and reliance on the nuclear family, as well as unclear relations between people and land, are today intrinsic to Lavongai social structure.

Every Tikana village has at least one big-man who "goes first" for it. He is a man who has been installed as a *memai*, a speaker for his people. These *memai* were usually among those who also occupied positions of leadership created by the Australian colonial government, and contemporary leaders in Papua New Guinea are often installed as *memai* back home in their villages.

The Lavongai did not have traditional big-men who led their villages, although there were some men, called *vaitas*, who sponsored initiations of young boys. Men appointed by the Australian colonial government often wielded considerable force among villagers, who feared being taken by them to jail. Some contemporary leaders are working with the PNG government, while others have created a separate polity, the Tutukuvul Isukul Association (TIA, United Farmers Association), within which they have, for the first time, built a widespread intervillage network.

Cultural Style

The style³ of Tikana culture is *group-oriented*, *institutionalized*, and *egalitarian*. The greatest value is keeping the group moving along the known path together. This is achieved through clearly institutionalized rules, which regulate relationships between individuals and groups and between people and land, and through following clear maxims in behavior: give, help, do things together. The group is prevented from

separating into hierarchical classes as people help the weak (including children, the handicapped, foreigners) and withdraw support from anyone who appears to be too strong. Daily life follows well-known routines: everyone knows what to do and feels included. People move slowly, carefully, responsively in relation to their fellows, and few words are added to synchronize their smooth interactions.

The style of Lavongai culture is *individualistic*, *noninstitutionalized*, and *peck-ordered*. The greatest value is the creation, protection, and assertion of the self. This is achieved through constant attention to seizing the main chance, gaining the upper hand. Alternatives are known, and none is institutionalized or required. People interact through taking, asking for help, teasing, flirting, provoking, rejecting. Every situation separates individuals into new peck orders wherein the weak struggle to survive, the strong to maintain their ascendancy, and all demand equality for their individual selves. Lavongais move assertively, alone; or sit in laughing and loquacious groups, finding their ways among their fellows through complex verbal probes.

New Ireland *Malanggan*: Political Aspects

The all-encompassing role of *malanggan* ceremonies in New Ireland life is well known.⁴ They serve to draw out individuals who lead their groups, and to create and recreate entangling alliances with other groups.

Networks

My research found people in attendance and participating in *malanggan* events who came from other islands as well as from villages strung out for one hundred miles along the east coast of New Ireland, and villages from across the mountain range on the west coast. In one case, people came to renew ties that had begun forty years earlier when a woman married from a central village to one further north. Not uncommonly, people came from villages long associated with a host village through several generations of intermarriage.

The core of participants are connected through marriage, but a central principle of *malanggan* structure requires bringing in new people from outside. It is more difficult and adventuresome to start an exchange with someone who, while no doubt distantly related through some web of intermarriages, has not been a regular partner in ceremonial events.

Exchanges are of pigs, shell currency, and *malanggan* art objects,

which function as, among other things, a special kind of wealth. Insider groups are enjoined to spread their wealth of various sorts to outsider groups as widely as possible, and it is explicitly recognized that the trickling down of resources, a leveling process, is an important function of *malanggan*. Everyone eats pig on such an occasion.

Networks form as the result of individual ties, and *malanggan* depends on the hard work and sustained attention of large numbers of people.⁵ Immediate family will feed a pig for four years in preparation for a *malanggan* for an important death in the family. Those who wish to have help must fulfill their own obligations, and help others also to fulfill theirs. This is a slow-moving but not stress-free society: the Tikana say they feel their debts "stuck to their skin."

Leadership

Big-men in New Ireland, who are called *memai* (speakers), function entirely in relation to the organization of *malanggan*. The single *memai* who will lead a *malanggan* sits with the relatives of the dead (usually several dead who will be memorialized together) to plan the series of events of the ceremony. They also confer with other *memai* who will play important roles. Struggles for power are not public and not violent, but are carried on with finesse, and have consequences for the groups of people who "come behind" leaders. Leaders do not boss but rather help the group: they are its servants, not its masters. The aim of political activity seems to be to bring up the weak and to keep in check the strong, so that resources and respect will be distributed adequately to all. Reciprocal exchange requires equal partners, and it is an essentially egalitarian balance that is sought. Tikana people express strong approval for their traditional society, where "no one is poor."

New Hanover Johnson Cult: Political Aspects

New Hanover had no integrating mechanism comparable to the New Ireland *malanggan*. Individuals clustered into factions in 1964 when they voted for Johnson, factions that finally began to dissolve only in 1983, but which never really became unified groups.

Networks

That the groups one fought in war might contain one's cross-cousin, whom one had to leave for others to kill, shows that politically stable networks did not reach out to include even close neighbors whom one

married. There were no regular exchanges of pigs or other valuables between villages or clans, or even between affines, that wove stable ties between individuals or families or communities. There were occasions, called *pata*, in which one community might provide food for another, which was later expected to reciprocate; but these occasions promoted subsistence industry, not political leadership, as they did not require, as a *malanggan* does, an established institutionalized leader for their organization and direction. Similarly, there were, and occasionally still are, gatherings called *wag* held in memory of a single dead person, but these are feasts prepared by the immediate relatives of the dead and are not occasions, as are *malanggan*, that require cooperation even within one village, let alone across a dozen villages.

The vote for Johnson united people along the entire southern coast of New Hanover and in the adjacent small islands in a political force, which led to the elimination of the Lavongai local government council, the refusal to pay taxes, the boycotting of subsequent elections, and the prevention of explorations and development by outside mining and timber companies. These political successes were accomplished by Johnson cultists who had evolved into the United Farmers Association (TIA): an economic development organization in the mind of the American Catholic priest, Fr. Bernard Miller, who helped to found it, but primarily a political action group to many cultists. TIA has continued to dominate events in the Johnson cult area, although it began to lose members and power after Fr. Miller was transferred in 1983 and money began to go astray. The anticultist faction in New Hanover, located mainly at the western end of the island, tries to participate in the postindependence government, but few changes have taken place anywhere in the island: as the cultists point out, the government is not interested in "saving" the people of New Hanover.

Leadership

By 1967, there were no traditional leaders functioning in New Hanover; nor had there been for many years, nor had there ever been any who regularly functioned outside, or even within, their own villages. I found three cases of men, from different ends of the island, who had become *vaitas* by sponsoring the seclusion of young men for initiation. Novices were drawn from neighboring hamlets or villages, as was the food that fed them and their initiated elders in seclusion. So far as I could determine, these *vaitas* did not exercise any leadership in other contexts. There were also men who were *bosap* (war leaders), men who took the

initiative in fighting other groups. In warfare, young boys stood next to their fathers (and moved down the line if they discovered themselves to be facing their cross-cousins) until they had killed someone and were then considered able to fight independently. Men often complain about the absence of anyone who can lead them well, but laughingly admit that it is a Lavongai fashion to be unwilling to follow anyone. "We are like little streams coming from a river," one told me. "Each one goes off in a different direction." Thus, they continue to live "like dogs or pigs," rubbish lives, as they say, waiting for someone to come to "save" them. The Johnson cult set the stage for the emergence of leadership qualities in many men who had previously been afraid to confront the colonial administrators, but none emerged as leaders of their fellows, each of whom claimed to be following only his own idea, his own wishes. In TIA, however, officers were elected, and President Walla Guk Guk has served, until recently with the help of Fr. Miller, as a respected leader (the first one, it seems, the Lavongai people have ever had) since 1967. Now, no one says that he stole money, but many think he has made promises he cannot fulfill.

Malanggan as Theater

Malanggan ceremonies combine the attributes of carnival and country fair, religious ritual and political ceremony, pageant and theater. Here I am going to look at *malanggan* as theater: a kind of religious drama similar to those of the Middle Ages, but without a supernatural focus. In its basic structure, it is reliably and reassuringly repeated, like Mass in the Catholic church, which some scholars have viewed as drama (Brockett 1977);⁶ its personnel and special events, however, vary with the particular deaths honored. While all the ceremony is progressing, it is guiding not only the social and emotional transformations of a *rite de passage* ending mourning for the dead, but also guiding exchanges that create or strengthen political and economic relationships.

Performing Malanggan

The Plot of the Play. A *malanggan* ceremony begins when the relatives of the dead, usually led by matrilineal kin of a dead big-man, decide to sponsor a ceremony to "finish" the dead of a hamlet or village. A *memai*, who may or may not be of the same clan as the dead, is selected to organize events. A known sequence is followed, although not all *malanggan* ceremonies include all possible events.⁷ At each of these,

people gather and contribute pigs and other foods, accomplish specific preparatory tasks, and plan and schedule future occasions. On the last day of the ceremonial cycle, a final peak in activity and offerings is achieved: people come from afar, the big pigs of close kin are finally brought cooked to the feast, offerings of song and dance by costumed performers are enacted, and the palm leaf barriers hiding the cemetery are removed to reveal the new cement markers and *malanggan* art objects now decorating clean graves in a clean cemetery. Much is made of secrecy in preparing these events, a secrecy that has to do not with magical power or mystical value, but with the gradual unfolding of the drama. The dead are now “finished”: socially, in that the ties they helped to create have been reformed by new exchanges; politically, in that a new *memai*, if needed, has been installed on this last day; economically, in that the relatives to whom the dead left shell currency and money have now paid out all these resources in exchange for the pigs, *malanggan* art objects, and services brought to them, so that the economic resources of the dead have been returned to circulation in the community; and emotionally, in that this final day requires an end to mourning. “You cannot go around sorry, sorry, sorry all the time,” one old *memai* told me. “*Malanggan* is a time to forget the dead and be happy”; and so the institutionalized play that fills the last day of *malanggan* creates, and symbolizes, a time to be happy: the happy ending people worked so hard to achieve.

Acts and Scenes. I have tried to briefly show the *malanggan* as a bounded art form by analyzing it into a dramatic sequence of acts and scenes:

- Act I: Preparations
 - Scene 1: Families Meet to Plan for the *Malanggan*
 - Scene 2: Announcements in the Villages: A *Malanggan* Will Be Held
 - Scene 3: Cleaning the Bush and Bringing the Bamboo for the New Cemetery Fence
- Act II: Working Together and Separately
 - Scene 1: Making Costumes, *Malanggan*, and Cement Monuments in Secluded Groups
 - Scene 2: Endless Scraping of Taro and Sweet Potatoes in the Cook Houses
 - Scene 3: Preliminary Feasts Wherein Support Is Garnered and Measured

- Act III: The Last Day: A Time to Be Happy
 Scene 1: *Bot* (Sing and Dance) All Night Before the Last Day
 Scene 2: The Final *Malanggan* Ceremony: Celebration and Farewell
 Scene 3: Good News: On the Way Home with Full Baskets

The Script. The words and actions of *malanggan* are traditional, simple, and repeated: there are many little parades, often led by children, as people lay down money and shell currency next to pigs being given or received, speeches over the pigs, a brief speech by an old *memai* installing a young *memai* to take over the work of the dead. Through repeated participation in many *malanggan* from childhood on, people know how to participate, how to “come behind” someone, how to help. The *memai* is the only character who has many formal lines to speak, but they require no special talent or rehearsal: “*Arakok! Arakok! Arakok!* (I say it is good! It is good! It is good!).” Other men announce the arrival of pigs or payments in simple repetitive formulas, and those who wish to do so make little speeches about the history of exchanges to which they are contributing.

Production Arrangements. The families of the dead decide, when they have raised their pigs and are “ready with shell currency” and have calculated the resources of their closest kin, that it is time for a *malanggan*. They invite a *memai* to take charge.

The Director. The *memai* will then be the director, but he must work in constant consultation with the families and with other *memai*. “A *memai*’s mouth is tired from talking,” one *memai* told me. “What do you think?” another said at a public meeting where a hundred gathered at a preliminary feast called to set the date for the final ceremony. “I am only one. It would not be good if I alone decided.”

Actors. Most actors in a *malanggan* play the social roles assigned to them by kinship, affinity, and locality in relation to the producers of the *malanggan*. In one ceremony, for example, a person may “come behind” someone who is wife to the cross-cousin of the dead; in another, that person may be the wife of the dead. There are a few special roles, assigned by the producers: Bringers of the *Malanggan* Art, Bringers of the Cement Monument, Bringers of the Bamboo for the Cemetery

Fence, Pig Cutters, and so on. The great worry regarding *malanggan* is that people may become "cross" and jealous over these assignments and "spoil" the *malanggan*. In one case, the leading *memai* stayed home on the last day and let another man take over lest those who were "cross" spoil the day. So intent on maintaining unity are the Tikana that no one mentioned the change, and many did not seem to realize what had happened. Each played well his or her part, and the show went on as scheduled, with an understudy in the lead role.

Acting. People play roles that are played in daily life, but are formalized and made public in *malanggan*. All have often played supporting roles and, having watched others, are ready without rehearsal to play leading ones when their time comes.

Costumes and Props. Only the *memai* has a formal costume for *malanggan*: a particular leaf arm band into which the feather of office is stuck, and the well-known shell ornament of New Ireland, the *kepkep*, around his neck. All others wear their everyday clothes when they are working, but for some of the final occasions they may wear their best dress-up outfits: not the shirt they wear on Sundays, but colorful party clothes. *Malanggan* ceremonies require, perhaps above all, *malanggan* art objects. And yet some Catholic villages no longer use them, for fear of offending the priests who used to think they were false gods, but who now decorate their houses and churches with them. People say they were never gods but "just decoration." Most villages also mark graves with cement monuments nowadays, which are erected, alone or along with the *malanggan* decorations, on the final day of ceremonies. One village originally planned only to have cement, but then someone said, "What, were they men who were nothing that they should not have *malanggan*? Did they not bring *malanggan* to other men?" And so the *malanggan* decorations, too, were ordered, at great expense.

Many other props recur: the little houses traditionally decorated with leaves and feathers in which *malanggan* objects are displayed, the new bamboo fences around the cemeteries, the slit drums, the shell trumpets, the feast food itself.

Special Effects. Special effects are provided by a slit drum, beat to call people together (in the old days there were many different codes known to some), the shell trumpets blown to announce the arrival of a

pig, the New Ireland "whistle drum," and the songs and dances of the people at appropriate times in the schedule.

Scenery. The first ritual event leading up to a ceremony requires people to chop down trees and cut bush on their way to the village cemetery. This is a "token" task nowadays, but in the old days this day to "Clear the Bush" probably meant a return to an abandoned site where loved ones had been left in their graves, which had become overgrown with jungle.

Auditoriums. The cleared space and the cemetery provide the auditoriums in which speeches are made. Pigs are killed and cooked "off stage," near the beach, which is the men's domain.

Stages. Stages are built in the village or in the cemetery for some performances. I have seen a stage built on which singers performed "to help people now to be happy," and another built in a cemetery on which a *memai* made his final speech and passed on *memai*hood to a young man. People distinguish *memai* who got their status "on a pig" or "on a stage," but the distinction merely marks variety in the occasions and does not signal rank differences.

Audiences. Most audience members are also participants in the preparations, the exchanges, the giving to major performers, or the production of the event. However, it is important that everyone is invited and that members of the public often do come only to the final feast. "What will the news of the *malanggan* be?" one *memai* asked at a preliminary feast. "Will people be good and truly full up?" It is a mark of success when the news is good and when food is left over for people to take home in their baskets.

The Meaning of the Malanggan: What the Play Is About

Malanggan is essentially a ritual performance. Its meaning is primarily acted out, rather than thought out; believed or accepted for its established and directly apprehended impartation, rather than for its argument or utilitarian functions. If, however, the ritual component of *malanggan* is its *sine qua non*, it is not a supernatural ritual. It is religious in that it relates to Ultimate Concerns,⁸ but the dead are not helplessly stranded in some unpleasant place or condition without it.

Malanggan is performed because, as various *memai* told me, "it eases the thoughts of the living about the dead." "We don't think of the spirit [of the dead]: we think of their way of living. We think of a person's life, not of his or her spirit, and we want to reciprocate." And, "*Malanggan* is not about the spirit: it is for respect." The respect invoked is not only for the dead: it is the foundation for all relationships, including political relationships, in a successful *malanggan* and in Tikana society.

Like the medieval morality play *Everyman*, *malanggan* ceremonies are about each person's mortality and our coming to grips with the inevitability of death. Like *Everyman*, the dead celebrated and "finished" in *malanggan* "are deserted by Kindred, Goods, and Fellowship. Eventually only Good Deeds goes with *Everyman* into the grave" (Brockett 1977:117). At one *malanggan* I attended, the leading *memai* addressed, metaphorically (at least), the spirits of the dead brothers being honored, telling them to leave the village and the living who mourned them: "Walk away, William. Walk away, Makalo." And their living brother added, "'Walk away' to William and Makalo? Do even *I* say this? Yes." While Kindred and Fellowship deserted them and their Goods were redistributed among the living, the Good Deeds and hard work of the dead were constantly invoked during the ceremony: "I see the widows of the dead here, and all those of their villages who come behind them with hard work. They are like a picture of the hard work of the two men [who are dead]." And, "Whenever I got something up, he was there, helping." But at a *malanggan*, it is time to "finish" the dead, and go on with the life of the living.

The most basic symbolism of *malanggan* is hard to see, because its symbols are very mundane and very direct: all activities are symbols of the same activities. Giving symbolizes and ritualizes giving, helping symbolizes and ritualizes helping, doing things together symbolizes and ritualizes doing things together: each activity dramatizes and symbolizes, more generally, all the efforts that sustain not only *malanggan* but also life, including the efforts to achieve a strength of character, of person, of body that inspires others to make their own contributions.

People everywhere make art forms from the skills required to make a living. Tikana have made a dramatic ceremony out of theirs. *Malanggan* makes honorable, beautiful, exciting what otherwise might be (and is for the Lavongai) boring and tedious labor; it makes a virtue and an art of necessity, a justification for pride where otherwise there might be contempt and weariness. Fears of deprivation are driven out by a display of plenty, the sadness of death terminated by a group affirmation of life, a sense of directionlessness lifted by a clearing of the known

path. When the *malanggan* is over and daily life resumes, the activities required to maintain life, having had their fundamental values ritualized in drama, retain some of their glory.

The Johnson Cult as Theater

The Johnson cult was part millenarian movement, part political action, part union protest, and part street theater. Here I am going to look at it as improvised drama, which successfully guided the Lavongais of the south coast of New Hanover through a confrontation with the colonial government, gave them a new understanding of their situation, and greatly increased their power to break government laws and to take control over their own lives. Unlike the revolutionary theater of the 1960s in America (Brustein 1971), the Lavongais' intention was originally merely resistance, not social change. They chose a weapon that was one of their sharpest but most ordinary: mockery. Surprised by the power they suddenly saw they had, they have continued to move together in their satiric drama for over twenty years. They won one thing they sought: the ability to make some of their own decisions. But they never got what they asked for: help in overcoming their isolation and developing their island. Unfortunately, as one man said regarding self-government, "just to be boss, with nothing, by and by it will be no good." In telling about the Johnson cult, I will have to tell how it was done, not how it is done: while it has continued its epic course over the years, the Johnson cult, unlike the New Ireland *malanggan*, had not been played before and will not be played again.

Performing the Johnson Cult

The Plot of the Play. The central problem of the play was the struggle for "moral equivalence"⁹ with everyone else in this world against men whose morals were in question and whose competence had amply been found wanting. In 1964, the Australian Administration of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea held elections in which people were asked to choose representatives to the newly formed House of Assembly, a kind of "practice parliament" created to prepare the people for self-government and independence (which were finally achieved in 1973 and 1975). This government action posed the proximate question and the initial dilemma. The play is about the responses of the Lavongais to this election. People in the villages heard about the election only second- and third-hand from their councillors: they did not know most of the candidates

(Europeans), did not like the rest (some Europeans and some educated Lavongais), and had no developed interest in being represented by anyone. In this situation, which was, to them, absurd, they found it easy, and amusing, to make an absurd decision: Let's vote for the president of America. Word spread quickly, and when people gathered at the Ramelek Methodist Mission station to vote on 15 February 1964, they found a blackboard set up before them on which had been written: "We want Johnson of America." The government officers were unable to get people to put their ballots in the red plastic ballot boxes prepared for them at this first and then at several other polling stations on the south coast, but on the north coast people voted "properly." Thus began the division between "Those Who Voted in the Box" and "Those Who Voted on the Board," a division which continues today.

Over the next few months, government officers patrolled the villages to explain that Johnson was not a candidate. Never mind, said the Johnsonites, now identified by the government as "cargo cultists" (Worsley [1957] 1968; Lawrence 1964): we want to vote for him anyway. Next, the government sent surprise patrols to gather census data, a preliminary record-keeping device necessary for tax collection, and threatened jail for any who did not appear to be counted. Finally, tax collectors, accompanied by eighty police, began to patrol by boat: "I looked out one day," one Catholic Sister told me, "and there was the Spanish Armada in the harbor!" Mass arrests began, and continued for three years. The charge: tax evasion and default.

Finally, the local American Catholic priest, Fr. Bernard Miller, called a meeting, and during discussions the idea of forming an economic advancement organization emerged and was enthusiastically endorsed. Called the Tutukuvul Isukul Association (TIA, "Stand Together to Plant," translated "United Farmers Association"), the organization established rules, collected dues, elected officers, claimed communal lands, cleared trees, planted coconuts, and placed TIA "flags" on the new TIA plantations. Those who were "the enemy," the anticultists who had "voted in the box," carried vicious rumors to the government officers, claiming that the cultists were "crazy," that they expected cargo free from the Americans, and that TIA was just a cover: "Those Who Voted on the Board," they said, were still waiting, as TIA members, for Johnson to come. Cultists did not answer these charges: they just worked hard, as they said. In a dazzling set of political maneuvers, they put themselves far ahead of their adversaries in the pecking order. In 1968, TIA president Walla was elected president of the local government council, to which cultists had refused to pay taxes, and he and his

supporters then voted the council out of existence. As they had hoped, "government came up inside of TIA." In 1972, Walla was elected to the seat in the House of Assembly that Johnson had failed to claim in 1964, but he found it a do-nothing body, and he came home to pursue TIA's work in New Hanover: plantations were purchased, transport acquired, and outside companies seeking to explore and exploit were prevented from gaining access to New Hanover resources. "The enemy" struggled in vain to join the activities of the new provincial and national governments, both of which had ceased, by 1980, to try to collect taxes, or to jail, or to govern New Hanover. In 1983, TIA members held an "independence march" and, later, proudly gathered at Mt. Patibung, site of American map-making activities in 1963, for a celebration. On this occasion, Walla declared independence from the Westminster-style government of Papua New Guinea, and demanded rule by an American-style presidential system. They were, it seemed, on this day, King of the Hill.¹⁰

But was that, after all, what they had wanted? To be powerful and alone?¹¹ Was that the direction their play meant to take? The actors, gradually realizing that the audience (the Australian administration) has left the theater, have begun to wonder themselves what the play was about. The show needed Johnson to arrive, *deus ex machina*, to straighten all the tangles that had evolved in various directions. But he never came; nor, alas, did any other Americans bearing grand schemes. The ending in view is neither happy nor tragic, but the vague and rather sudden denouement of comedy that signals that actors and audience alike are weary of the complications of the play and ready to go home.

Acts and Scenes. The history of events in the Johnson cult can be seen as developing dramatically, and analyzed into acts and scenes.

- Act I: The Election
 - Scene 1: A Fireside Chat: Mulling Over the Upcoming Election
 - Scene 2: Gathering at the Mission, the First Polling Station
 - Scene 3: The Vote for Johnson of America
- Act II: Government Versus Cultists: Responses and Initiatives
 - Scene 1: Meetings to Hear Gentlemanly Explanations

- Scene 2: Surprise by Census Patrols and Threats of Jail
- Scene 3: Tax Patrols, "the Spanish Armada," and Mass Arrests
- Act III: New Directions and Old Fashions
 - Scene 1: "Why Not Develop Our Place?" The Emergence of TIA
 - Scene 2: Hard Work, Strong Faith, Vague Hopes, and "The Enemy"
 - Scene 3: From Political Drama to Dramatic Politics: Seizing Control Without and Within the Power Structure
- Epilogue: What Did We Get? What Have We Got? What Did We Want?

The Script. Individuals who converged at the Ranmelek Methodist Mission station to vote on 15 February 1964 had no thought of this day's being special. They did not expect this election to help them solve the problems with the co-ops, coconuts, coffee, and the council about which they had long complained. When, suddenly, the word spread that some people were going to vote for America, people were elated, and they all agreed to the idea: "We like it." But they did not know what to do. From there on, they improvised the script from their life experiences and their participation in contemporary events.

Consensus flashed at the mission on that day, and no one who was there will ever forget it. It all happened so fast that no one had time to decide who would do what, but that is a feature of improvised dramas: scripting is not necessary. People were guided by a common understanding and a pleasing perspective on reality. There was much confusion, but one thing was clear: instead of voting for one of the candidates offered up by the Australian administration, they were going to vote for someone they really wanted, for the president of America. They had wanted to be ruled by the Americans ever since some Lavongais had worked with Americans during World War II. And at the time of the election in 1964, memories of American generosity and egalitarianism had been refreshed by the presence of a group of U.S. military map makers finishing work that had put them in New Hanover, two thousand feet up Mt. Patibung, for several months. All drama grows out of people's lives, and it was the Americans present "backstage" on Mt. Patibung, and those remembered from wartime, who significantly defined the social and cultural context within which "The Election for

America" was played. Suddenly, at the Methodist mission station in 1964, what had been a half-hearted obedience to a government order became a genuine opportunity for self-expression. The script for the Johnson cult, unlike that for the New Ireland *malanggan*, had not come down through the ages: it had to be ad-libbed. Since this art comes easily and daily to Lavongais, their script grew and flourished.

Production Arrangements. The whole show was originally arranged by the government officials: cultists and anticultists merely responded to government cues. But the actors did not like the version of the myth they were asked to reinforce in the show; so they eventually quit trying to influence it, ignored the producers' orders, and took over the entire production themselves.

The Director. No one took responsibility for directing the show once it split off from the official version. There were messengers and spokesmen, but each person took responsibility only for himself and his own actions and beliefs. It was hard for Europeans, used to centralized control, to believe that there was no director: "This was a very well-organized thing," one Australian missionary told me. Those who are familiar with contemporary European theater or the New York Living Theater, however, are aware that drama may be developed, sometimes in relation to audiences, by actors without interference from directors.¹²

Actors. The accounts of the vote at Ranmelek mission given by all the actors reveal the sense of drama that built toward the events of that day. People had found a way to play themselves, all leading roles, instead of the dull, subservient roles assigned by the government. Pengai had been the "mouth for everyone." It was he who had sent his brother, some days before, to find out "the name of the man who replaced President Kennedy" (about whose death people had heard on the radio) from a group of Americans who were working on map making at Mt. Patibung in the New Hanover mountains. Old Savemat was given the important role of writing the vote on the blackboard, to which he, as a local mission worker, had access. His nephew helped him choose what words to write in pidgin English: "We want Johnson of America. That is all." When the government officers saw the board next to their red plastic ballot box on the morning of the election, they turned the board around, and proceeded to call the people of the first village on their list to come forward with their ballots. It was Yaman, a man whose arm swung uselessly at his side, who stepped forward as others hesitated, and created

his historic, and his only, part in this drama: "Our vote is already written on the blackboard," he said. "We want Johnson of America." "True?" he asked, looking back at the crowd pressing forward around him. And then every man, woman, and child shouted out, "Yes!" and ran away, leaving the place clear of people! Nearly everyone shouted with laughter as they retold and reenacted this scene. They loved the joke they had played on the Australians.

But one actor, guided by his own thinking, played a lonely role in this scene. As everyone melted away into the bush, only Councillor Silakau remained behind. He saw that the patrol officers were upset and ashamed, and he, a man who sometimes cried in church over the plight of the helpless, felt a little sorry for them. He and the Australian missionary and his wife voted by dropping their ballots into the red box. No one was left to see him, and he did not remember for whom he had voted. He had, however, he said, not allowed other men to "boss my thinking," and he had played the part that was true to himself.

Each actor seemed most interested in telling me about his own role in the drama, less interested than I was in the whole play. But that is as it should be: an improvisation is played primarily for the players, not for the world, and each plays primarily for himself, though in relation to each other and to a general theme. Each actor enhanced primarily his own understanding and only incidentally that of other people. In living theater, the individual may express all his feelings: in this case, resentment and longing, sardonic wit, and the inalienable right of each individual to be his own hero. But the power, usually unacknowledged, from which each person gained strength was the power of the people together. As Pengai, who clearly understood this, said: "Before, each man knew for himself, in his own way. In the election, all our knowledge came together."

Acting. "Does it ever seem to you that these people are just acting?" Carroll Gannon, an Australian medical officer who was very close to the cultists, asked me one day. In an improvised drama, the personae of the cast and characters are blended, as they were in the Johnson cult, and the conflicts between cultists, noncultists, government officers of various sorts (administrative, police, service), missionaries of various faiths and nationalities, and European residents are all basic to the plot and pivotal to the action of the play. It is difficult to clearly know, then, when people are acting and when, if ever, they are not.

At first, the government officers of various ranks did not play themselves, but, rather, their own busy roles as professionals. Still, it was hard for them to act their parts well, because they had to abandon the

script with which they had come to New Hanover, and they were not allowed to ad-lib a new one. They needed authorization, instructions: cables were sent, cables were received. Back in government headquarters on the mainland, meetings were held, decisions were made. A new script was forwarded, but it was the same old script: business would proceed as usual. The vote for Johnson would not be mentioned, law and order would be restored, patrol officers would patrol the villages.

Opposition changed the Lavongai expression from an impulsive to a serious demonstration. The cultists were forced to play in earnest because the government did: patrol officers began to take people off to jail, to give chase, to shoot coconuts off trees as "demonstrations of strength."

While there was no director and no script, there were some actors who tried to clarify, for themselves, each other, and the audience, what was happening. Oliver was the most philosophically articulate of these, and he took his own little show on the road. He traveled from village to village after the vote, talking to people. As a result, he said,

Their minds were clear. That is, they got our thinking, that's all. They must all stand up and be strong in this work, and make this trouble, so that it will have a name, or a year, or a time that by and by all places must hear of this trouble, and seek out the meaning of this trouble: it has come up from what? It has come up from lying, that's all. Making bullshit at this time, for plenty of years.

I asked, "From the lying of Australia?" and Oliver answered, "Yes, about looking after everyone." Seeking deep personal meaning and clarification is one of the goals of contemporary people-oriented "poor" theater.¹³ Those who heard Oliver did not try to decide whether Oliver was just acting or whether he was sincere in his beliefs: they just listened. "The enemy" and the government officers, however, said Oliver was a fraud.

Nevertheless, some of the Australians and missionaries, disgruntled in their own work, began to dislike their parts and to like the Lavongais. Downstage, away from the others, many government officers and other Europeans slipped some tax money to the cultists and noncultists to show they were really good guys, just acting out the villain role assigned to them. A man named Bosap said that officers were all alike, just doing their jobs; but some of them found ways to step out of character.

Scenes from the Johnson cult were dramatically reenacted at least several times by the cultists when they performed for various events,

usually holidays in the mission calendar. It was the arrest and jailing of the men on which these reenactments focused. The government officials with guns were always played as clowns.

Costumes and Props. There were not many props or costumes in the Johnson cult, but the cultists made the most of what they had. It was the blackboard, the guns and nightsticks, and the red jail *laplaps* (wrap-around skirts) that recurred in their accounts and in their reenactments. And the red ballot box became a symbol for the enemy, as did the hated badge of the councillor.

When the drama shifted to scenes of TIA, new props became crucial. Fr. Miller believed that symbols were important to people, and he created for TIA what were called "flags," painted wooden signs made to mark the new plantations. People often wondered what these flags meant, and did not always fully accept a mundane explanation.

Scenery. Scenery was provided by villages, jails, prison boats, the bush: wherever confrontations occurred.

Special Effects. A few gunshots rang out and into the story line, and one smoke bomb: a young man, to everyone's horror, was ordered to go stand in it. "The people," the government officer who gave the order told me, "must understand our strength."

Auditoriums. The auditoriums were the cleared spaces in villages, as they were for New Ireland *malanggan*.

Stages. All the world's a stage for the Lavongais, and wherever two were gathered together there were players.¹⁴

Audiences. As in *malanggan*, the audience was composed of participants in general. But occasionally outsiders were brought in specifically to be "audiences": most notably, a United Nations Visiting Mission and other outside "experts" who came to hear Lavongai grievances. But they were really there, Lavongais sometimes thought, to make them stop acting like this, pay their taxes, and get off stage.

The Meaning of the Johnson Cult: What the Play Was About

The Johnson cult was an attempt to create a moral order where people felt that one was lacking. In order to do this, they seized control first of

the definition of the situation; specifically, of the goals of the election offered to them by the Australians. Both Australian government officials and the Lavongais' own educated elite had failed to help them: it was, therefore, morally justifiable for them to vote for America, a country that would, they hoped, help them. The *raison d'être* of the Johnson cult was its support for the assertion that each individual, his true wishes and beliefs, his equal worth with all others, is of Ultimate Concern; and each person is worthy of being saved in this world, in his own lifetime. "The Australians have been here for many years, and they have not changed our lives. Now we want the U.S.A. to have its turn. We want them to teach us the best way how to live good, happy, and useful lives," Samuel wrote in a speech read to the U.N. Visiting Mission.

In contrast to the Tikana, who defined the meaning of life in terms of the good lives of the dead, Lavongais who remembered the dead saw in their lives nothing to emulate, and much to abandon. It was the anticipated death of the self, not the past deaths of others, that figured explicitly in cultists' explanations of their actions. They wanted something for themselves in this world: not mere cargo, as their detractors claimed, but good and meaningful lives.

The Johnson cult was a dramatic expression in which each actor was able to gain some understanding of his role and to affirm his faith in himself and in a moral universe. Cultists strutted and fretted their hour upon the stage, and then they went to work in TIA. They let the world know (literally, through the U.N. Visiting Mission) in a powerful expression that they affirmed the value of their lives, however barren of the world's goods and savvy.

An improvised drama based on the true lives of the actors does not end, but shifts its focus and rests. As the Lavongai actors rest, sitting and talking, "turning things over in our thinking," I suspect that they are wondering, still, what really happened: had they, indeed, won all their confrontations, consolidated their power? But was that what they had wanted? Perhaps when the drama picks up again, it will meander its way toward some clearer answer, or some truer question.

Conclusion

Some scholars of theater think that all theater is political, while others restrict the use of the term to that which is intended to be political.¹⁵ As an anthropologist, I prefer to see all theater, and all art, as having political aspects. I think it is more difficult for us to see that all politics also

have dramatic aspects, and are led by artistic dimensions. In exploring these dimensions, we find that we anthropologists need not, must not, limit our definitions of "political organization" to such characteristics as "legitimate use of force."

Art, and specifically theater, no doubt has universal underpinnings, but the forms built on top of these are certainly culture-specific edifices. My Lavongai friends who attended *malanggan* ceremonies found them astonishingly boring: "If we had to wait this long to eat in New Hanover," said one, "we would all long since have gone home." The fullness of symbolic associations swelling the meaning of actions for Tikana were unknown and unfamiliar to Lavongais. And Tikana who were asked to join the Johnson cult found the very suggestion, made in a church building, rude and disrespectful. Soft lies to save other people's faces are a steady feature of everyday life in New Ireland, but the deliberate marshaling of individual wit and conviction to form heavy satire with which to assault others is unknown, unfamiliar, and profoundly unpleasant to the Tikana. Such satire is widely, but not universally, known among oppressed oppositions in the world, as are formal, respectful, repeated ceremonial dramas among those established in some power structure. It is important for anthropologists to use theatrical and other art models in the analysis of society, culture, and politics, if we want to understand any of these. Without politics, art has no power; without art, politics has nowhere to go, and no way to get there.

NOTES

1. I have conducted fieldwork among people of the Tigak, Kara, and Nalik language groups of New Ireland, whom I am calling the Tikana, during seven periods of research: 1965, 1966–1967, 1972, 1974, 1983, 1988, and 1990. I worked with the Lavongai of New Hanover during these same periods of research, although I was not allowed to visit their island in 1965 and 1983 (Billings 1989b and Billings 1992). Findings regarding the Tikana and Lavongai are reported in Billings 1969, 1970, 1972, 1983, 1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1992; and Billings and Peterson 1967.

2. Research findings that have especially contributed to my understanding include Hauser 1952; Lomax 1968; and Bernstein 1964. See Billings 1970, 1972, 1987. See also Billings 1989c.

3. This concept is developed in Billings 1972 and 1987.

4. See especially Groves 1933, 1935; Powdermaker 1933; and Lewis 1969.

5. I have seen 250 to 650 attend such feasts. They were usually initiated by men, but sometimes by women. All the public speakers I saw were men, but I was told women could also play this role.

6. I have used many of the categories Brockett uses in organizing my analysis.
7. For a discussion of the selection of ritual events, see Turner 1989.
8. "Ultimate Concerns" is Paul Tillich's term for "religion," widely discussed in his work and in the work of others about him. See, e.g., McKelway 1964.
9. Kenneln Burridge coins this term in his work on Mambu (1960). All active Johnson cultists during this period were men. Their wives and children generally supported them, but they said the vote for Johnson was "men's business."
10. Several people tape-recorded this event. The local news media gleefully reported that TIA members had met on Mt. Patibung "to await Jesus," but the tapes confirm TIA members' accounts: they heard speeches about TIA, sang some traditional songs, and ended with a Methodist prayer.
11. In coming to my present understanding of the Johnson cult and the people who created it, I have often thought of Max Weber's work on prophets and pariahs (1952), and especially of a poem about Moses by Alfred de Vigny (1951), which contains these lines:

*Je vivrai donc toujours puissant et solitaire?
Laissez-moi m'endormir du sommeil de la terre.*

[Must I then live always powerful and alone?
Let me lie down in the sleep of the common man.]
Moïse, lines 49–50

12. The Living Theater is the prime example. See Brockett 1964.
13. Grotowski has written clearly about this point (1968:37): "[T]he decisive factor in this process is the actor's technique of psychic penetration. He must learn to use his role as if it were a surgeon's scalpel, to dissect himself. It is not a question of portraying himself under certain given circumstances, or of 'living' a part; nor does it entail the distant sort of acting common to epic theatre and based on cold calculation. The important thing is to use the role as a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask—the innermost core of our personality."
14. "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It* II: 7, line 139).
15. Schechner (1974) holds the former view, Kirby (1975) the latter. Schechner (1985), Schechner and Schuman (1976), and Victor Turner (1957, 1974, 1982) have led the way to the kind of analysis I attempt here. Potential pitfalls of the approach have been probed by Sandall (1978).

THE BREADFRUIT TREE STORY: MYTHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN PALAUAN POLITICS

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In February of 1990 Palauans¹ held their seventh plebiscite on whether to approve a Compact of Free Association with the United States—the latest in an eleven-year series of referenda and elections on the national and state levels to establish constitutional systems of government and end the U.S. trusteeship administration of this small Pacific island nation. In early December 1989 one of the first signs that yet another plebiscite would be held was the erection of two political campaign billboards on the main streets of the capital city of Koror.² During previous plebiscites the roadsides of Koror were peppered with brightly painted billboards, outward images of the deep political divisions in Palau. In the tense, at times violent Palauan political conflicts of the 1980s, the battles of the billboards provided one arena in which confrontation could be depersonalized, the disagreements contained to attempts to persuade voters through striking images of what Palau is or should be. Opposing sides appropriated Palauan cultural histories, legends, and proverbs as each sought to demonstrate its true Palauan identity deeply rooted in the past in a visual art form derived from the ubiquitous Palau storyboards, which were themselves derived from the carved end gables and interior beams of *bai* (chiefly and community meetinghouses)—symbol of the Palauan polity.³

In Palau the deadly serious game of politics is itself a high art form, bringing the canons of chiefly expression into the village at large. What in the past was alluded to in mnemonic *bai* beam carvings, to be decoded by chiefly explicators, is now in public view for all to see and interpret for themselves. The messages of most signs are clear but at

times require a viewer to be educated in the histories and traditions of Palau to appreciate the multilayered communications so prized by the chiefs, to be able to catch all the subtle nuances of geographical reference, personal and political play. Some signs support alternate interpretations, inviting the viewer to see a position in a new light, taking the burden of statement from the artist and giving it to the viewer. At the metalevel of communication the message may directly contradict the overt image, depending upon the orientation and knowledge of the receiver, following centuries-old practices of chiefly *kelulau* (secret coded political communications).

Palauan history is the history of transformation, of re-creation out of the structure and essence of the past. The physical world, the cosmological sequences of worlds—even the gods themselves—are created out of their precursors. Rather than the endless “begats” of the biblical Genesis, the Palauan creation story is a series of transformations, of the incorporation of change through the structures of the past. People turn to the past to validate position and power, incorporating signs such as the *bai* gable to stand for the new constitutional government, a radically different structure. Chiefly past and constitutional present do coexist, most often working together but at times in confrontation. In this small community, politics may become highly charged, yet the outward norm of harmonious relations must be maintained. Multilayered visual and oral communications, subject to alternate interpretations, remain one of the safer ways to express opposition.

From the wealth of Palau’s political imagery I have chosen to focus on the *bai* and its transformation. Once architectural container and symbol of the body politic—the chiefly council—and focus of the village’s artistic expression and iconographic representation, the *bai* has today become a disembodied icon, with images of its distinctive gable now used at all levels to represent Palau, and more specifically, Palauan government. I further trace the artistic progression that directly links the *bai* and the billboards: from *bai* gable and interior beam carvings, to storyboards, to paintings, to painted billboards. From the hundreds of stories and histories once preserved on the *bai* beams, I have chosen the one, the Breadfruit Tree Story, that figures prominently in *bai* gable carvings both past and present and is ubiquitous on storyboards produced for tourists, billboards, and contemporary paintings. The story condenses the mythological history and transformation of the goddess of the current world. By tracing the transformations of one of Palau’s key symbols, the Breadfruit Tree, as well as transformations of the media of artistic expression, I will demonstrate that the arts not only reflect polit-

ical and structural transformations of Palauan society but are in themselves active agents through which Palauans negotiate such changes.

Contemporary Palau

About thirteen thousand Palauans today inhabit the predominantly high, andesitic islands of the Palauan archipelago in the westernmost Caroline Islands just north of the equator, due east of Mindanao in the Philippines and north of Irian Jaya. Another five thousand live in the United States and its Pacific territories, drawn overseas by opportunities for higher education or employment. The early population of this culturally homogeneous group⁴ has been estimated at twenty to fifty thousand, but contact with Western diseases reduced the population to about four thousand by the beginning of the twentieth century. Today's population is youthful, with 71 percent under the age of thirty years in 1980 (PCAA 1983: table 34).

While its largest island, Babeldaob, is large by Micronesian standards, the land area of the entire Republic of Palau is under five hundred square kilometers—smaller than the island of Moloka'i in Hawai'i. Its importance in global politics during the last decade far surpasses either its land or population size. Palau was the first country to adopt a nuclear-free constitution, and its continuing confrontation with the United States over this and other issues has led to its prominence within Pacific, U.S., and worldwide antinuclear movements. This last remnant of the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, itself the last trust territory in the world, has established a constitutional government but has been unable, despite severe internal and U.S. economic and political pressures, to resolve its future relationship with the United States. Its continual confrontation with the United States, expressed by the worldwide media in "David and Goliath" imagery, has captured international attention.

In 1980, after a series of three referenda, Palauans overwhelmingly adopted a new constitutional form of government strongly influenced by the American model. Executive, legislative, and judicial functions were split into separate branches, with an elected president and vice-president holding national executive power. In the past the autonomous villages had joined together into confederations headed by two paramount chiefs; today one chief of each village (now called "states" of the nation of Palau) joins in a national-level Council of Chiefs, which is mandated to advise the president only on matters of tradition and custom. In practice, however, the power of individual chiefs varies according to the new state constitutions, and many contemporary practices

can still be best understood in the framework of the symbolic and historical relationships between villages and the interconfederation competition between the paramount chieftaincies of Melekeok and Koror. There has also been an overt attempt to embed the present in the past: the legislature is called the Olbiil era Kelulau (House of Whispers)⁵ in an evocation of the past's chiefly council houses—in which negotiations were conducted according to strict, private protocols—even though the legislature is the house of elected members, not the meetinghouse for the Council of Chiefs. The national seal is an artistic representation of the gabled front of the meetinghouses of the highest-ranking villages, and a mini-*bai* was used for the inauguration of the first president and first constitutional government.

Mythohistorical Background, or The Birth of Belau

The histories of the time of the gods depict constant transformations, the rebirths of gods during the long period of creation (for fuller texts, see Umetaro 1974; Parmentier 1988; Nero 1987). In Palauan cosmology life developed from the sea, from the mother clam, Kim er a Lukes, who lived in the shallow reef area off Angaur and there gave birth first to the fishes and then to three gods: Tellebuu from whom clans (*kebliil*) were born, Uchererak who ascended into heaven, and finally Chuab. During his lifetime Chuab established the system of Palauan government, naming chiefly titles and councils in the seven villages of the First World, who became known as his children: Ngerchol, Ngurusar, Ngeruikl, Mengellang, Ngermid, Ngersuul, and Ulimang (Society of Historians 1990:12). In his death, according to some, the falling body of Chuab formed the very islands of Palau. Men and women were born of the maggots that consumed his body, coupling and inhabiting the new land. Thus from Chuab came Belau, who in turn was reborn as Dirramellomes (She Who Brought Light to the World), Dilidechuu, Iluochel (the goddess who brought taro, the main starch food), and finally Dirrachedebsungel (Woman of the Chedebsungel Tree).

It is as Dirrachedebsungel that the god/goddess becomes one of the core symbols of contemporary Palau, represented in the Breadfruit Tree Story (Meduu Ribtal). Versions abound, yet the key elements of this moral tale summarized below remain the same.

The Breadfruit Tree Story

An old woman, Dirrachedebsungel, lived alone on the island of Ngibtal after being abandoned by her fellow villagers, who

had decided to move on to a better site. Since Dirrachedebsungel had no husband or children to care for her, she was considered a liability and not told of the move. Luckily she had a special tree growing outside her home, a wondrous breadfruit tree on which grew large, green fruits. So even though she was too old to go work in the taro swamps, she could still obtain starches to cook. But she had no husband or sons living with her to provide her with fish. One of her sons, who was part god, heard of her plight and returned to assist her. He dove under the island until he reached the roots of the tree and made a hole through the main root up into one of the branches. And then from that day forward whenever the waves tossed, fishes came out of the branch for Dirrachedebsungel.

Eventually the people of Ngibtal learned of this magical tree possessed by Dirrachedebsungel, and they were jealous of her good fortune. Why should the women have to slave in the taro patches and the men spend all their time fishing? They went to visit the old woman to share in her bounty. But being greedy, they were not content just to receive the fishes as they came forth from the branch. They cut off the branches and finally the main trunk of the tree to obtain its riches. Then all the waters of the sea flowed through the trunk and flooded the island, which is why today Ngibtal has sunk beneath the seas. If you look carefully off the coast near Ngiwal, you can still today see the remains of the village under the sea.

The magical Breadfruit Tree is the most popular cultural image in Palau, and it has come today to stand for Palau and the wealth of its natural resources. In 1910 a depiction of the Breadfruit Tree Story decorated the gable of one of the Koror community houses, which was photographed and published in the German Südsee Expedition account (see Figure 1). Renditions of the story today decorate official community structures such as the gable of the Civic Center in Koror, a modern architectural interpretation of a traditional *bai*. The Breadfruit Tree Story is one of the most commonly chosen themes for storyboards carved for visitors from abroad as a souvenir of their visit to Palau, and it has decorated storyboards officially given by the Republic of Palau to U.S. officials.

In a way the Breadfruit Tree is an unlikely “key symbol” (Ortner 1974), since in itself breadfruit is little valued, taro and fish being the quintessential female starch and male protein foods required for a proper meal. However, the story is visually striking and readily accessi-

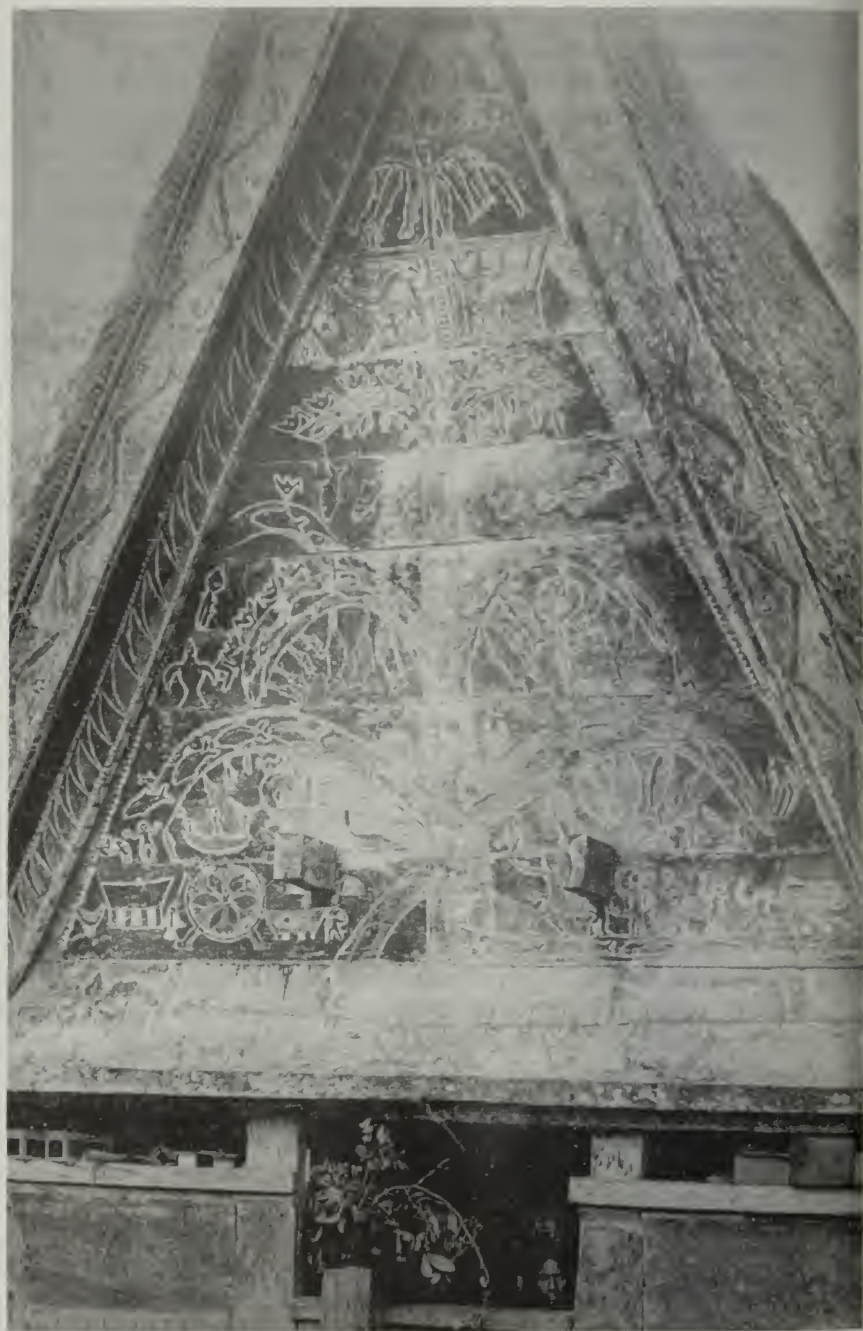


FIGURE 1. South gable of Bai er a Dngeronger, depicting the mythohistorical Breadfruit Tree, Koror, 1909. (From Krämer 1917: plate 5)

ble to those ignorant of Palauan traditions. It magically incorporates both female and male productivity, and the easily comprehended summary of the story carries the important moral injunctions to care for the elderly and not be too greedy. The reason that Dirrachedebsungel *does* stand for Palau—specifically the Palauan polity—is further coded in history and legend. Cultural knowledge is required to make the additional transformation.

The Story of Milad

And while the island of Ngibtal was sinking, Dirrachedebsungel crossed over to Ngerchebukl and lived under a *bkau* tree, so she became Dirrauchulabkau (Woman from Under the Bkau).

While called Dirrauchulabkau, the woman gained the favor of the seven messengers of the gods. They asked her to cook rabbitfish for them while they completed their assignment from the gods to find who was responsible for stealing the eye of the gods' watchman. When the messengers returned Dirrauchulabkau gave them their baskets of food, and they departed. When they opened the baskets they were at first angry to find only taro, then pleased when they opened the taro to find that the rabbitfish had been tenderly cooked inside. Thus the messengers of the gods vowed to save the old woman when the world was flooded in retribution for the theft. They returned and instructed the woman to build a raft to save herself when the waters rose.

After the waters receded, they returned again to find the woman but found that the raft had overturned and the woman drowned, so they went to beg assistance from the gods to bring the woman back to life. When she came back to life she then became Milad (She Who Was Dead).

Milad is the founding goddess of the Second World of Palau. She gave birth to the stone representations of the four leading villages of today's polity: the eldest son, Ngeremlengui, followed by the son Melekeok, the daughter Aimeliik, and finally the youngest son, Oreor (in English, spelled Koror).

Thus Dirrachedebsungel, the woman of the Breadfruit Tree Story, is in fact an earlier form of Milad, the founding goddess of the contemporary World of Milad, and thus signifies Palau. Today many younger

Palauans do not yet know the connections of the Breadfruit Tree Story with Milad. In the past the histories were known by the male and female elders, who drew upon them to make particular points or admonitions. Only the parts of the story relevant to the issue at hand might be told—the histories were not told as one long, complete tale, as one overall text. In the oral histories the stories exist as discrete units, some as small moral tales known by the general public, others as more serious clan and village histories controlled and told only by the proper ranking elders who alone knew all their interconnections.⁶ Stories were associated with villages, and village histories as well as significant new events would be recorded in the *bai* carvings, the new becoming in turn sedimented onto the past through existing media and structures (see Parmentier 1985a, 1988).

A true innovation or incorporation from abroad, such as the architecture of the Palauan *bai*, which radically differs from all other Carolinian community house constructions, became Palauan by being embedded in the past through founding legends. During normal times, and even in the presence of cataclysmic change, people hold strongly to the symbolic and structural bases by which they understand their lives and the events impinging on them. By far the most common way to incorporate current events is through structures of the past (Sahlins 1981a). Only when the changes are too great to be contained within the existing structure may there be both a structural and corresponding symbolic transformation.

The histories given above capture one such symbolic transformation, so great that it is coded as a shift between worlds—the first, the World of Chuab, governed by the seven village “sons” of the gods, and the second, the World of Milad, governed by the four village “children” of Milad. Yet not all structural transformations or symbolic mediations are accepted (see Nero 1989:140 for one apparent failed attempt at symbolic transformation in Palau). And there may be a considerable time lag between structural change and symbolic interpretation. Although the villages of Ngeremlengui, Melekeok, Aimeliik, and Koror had clearly replaced Chuab’s villages in political importance by 1783, as they were described in a book by shipwrecked Englishmen who spent three months there building a new boat (Keate 1803), it appears that the history of the goddess Milad was not told to the British then or during a later expedition (1791). Yet by the 1860s, all foreign visitors who compiled written accounts recorded the history of Milad and her village children. It appears that in this case the ideological explanation followed the new political structure, a true “invention of tradition” (Hobs-

bawm and Ranger 1983) to validate the power of the strong new consolidated villages.

A structural change thus became part of the cosmological cycle, through a new hegemonic tradition that encompassed the transformed political relationships, which in turn was incorporated into Palauan world cycles. In the past 150 years this tradition has become the accepted norm into which all new events and structures are subsumed. Even the radically different political relationships established by the 1980 Constitution of the Republic of Palau have not yet displaced the World of Milad in which intervillage relationships are still symbolically framed.

The *Bai* as Aesthetic Locus, as Symbol of Palau

Community house, council of chiefs, chants, and histories (*bai*, *klobak*, *chesols*, and *cheldech duch*)—these are the core concepts, physically grounded in the meetinghouse, that cluster in any Palauan discussion of the essential Palauan way.⁷ Lacking any generic label for something so basic, Palauans have adopted and transformed a Japanese word, adding *siukang* to their Palauan lexicon as the new “Palauan” word that today incorporates both custom and tradition. Like the borrowed word, Palauan customs selectively incorporate elements that have been added throughout the centuries. But as the initial listing of core concepts indicates, the essential symbol of custom and tradition, handed down from the past to the present, was the community house, the *bai* (Figure 2). The *bai* represented the polity—art, architecture, and political expression were inextricably interwoven. In the past the *bai* was the place of meeting and decision making, and the aesthetic locus (Maquet 1971) of the community. The chiefly councils and village clubs met in the *bai*, which were ranked and decorated according to the status of the village and the village council or club so housed (see Jernigan 1973 for a complete typology of *bai*).

The main village *bai* was the storehouse of the histories of the village, graphically represented in the low-relief carved paintings that covered the boards of the two peaked gables, one at each end of the thatch-roofed structure, and the interior beams (see Figure 5). The placement of decorative motifs on the *bai* followed a strict grammar, and Jernigan reports that it was common for *bai* artists to select the Breadfruit Tree Story for presentation on the gable, as the triangular shape of the tree provided an elegant artistic solution to filling the triangular area of the gable panel, which would otherwise be broken by a stacked series of



FIGURE 2. Bai er a Airai, 1991. (Photo by Karen L. Nero)

story beams (1973:115). The low-relief painted carvings served as mnemonic devices for the chiefly explanations, which might vary both by the storyteller and by the situation to which it was addressed (Kesolei 1971:13). Key images of the history of the village and its interrelationships with its friends and enemies were recorded and retold by the chiefs and elders who alone could decode the past and interpret its meaning.

While the Palauan *bai* and its decorative motifs clearly predate European influence,⁸ the early meetinghouses were apparently little decorated, for they were not remarked upon by the shipwrecked British captain Henry Wilson and his men in 1783. The drawings made by Wilson's draftsman, Devis, greatly impressed the Palauans (Keate 1803: 69), as did the efficiency of metal tools. When the sailors departed they left behind what metal tools they could spare, sparking a flourishing of Palauan art and architecture. The next European visitors to Palau, a British expedition that arrived in 1791, described the splendid new

Koror *bai* that had been built since Wilson's departure. Comparison of the slightly Europeanized illustrations of this *bai* (Hockin 1803: plates opposite pp. 20–21 of the supplement) with present-day *bai* demonstrates that the placement of the main icons (chicken, the god of construction, money symbols, money god) and proportions of the *bai* have remained constant to this day.

During the next century artistic production continued to flourish, centered in the *bai*, which embodied both history and power. In 1910 German ethnographers Augustin and Elizabeth Krämer described eighty-five major *bai* in Palau and recorded more than two hundred historical stories and the locations in which each was depicted on *bai* throughout Palau. An analysis of the spatial representation of the stories indicates that *bai* carvings depicted not only village victories, but also stories ridiculing that village's enemies as well. The history of artistic confrontation is long established in Palau.

Destruction of community property—*bai* and war canoes—was more important to victory than numbers of warriors killed or captured during the nineteenth-century wars between Melekeok and Koror. These wars culminated in the 1882 destruction of fourteen of Melekeok's *bai* by a British man-of-war that was drawn into the fray. By the mid-twentieth century nearly all the ornately decorated men's houses had been destroyed by either typhoon or war—local Palauan wars or World War II.

Nothing captures the changes in the systems of government and the increasing individuation of Palauan society better than the changes in the construction and utilization of the *bai*. The thatch-roofed, hardwood *bai* contained the representations of local history. The *bai* was the focal point of the chiefly institution, the sacred and respected place where the chiefs met and from which all community decisions were promulgated and justice handed down. The production and matrix of activities surrounding the *bai* supported and reflected the community structure and the hierarchical ranking of the community, culminating in the status of the chiefs. The chiefs' *bai* was the most elaborately decorated, and its construction governed by complex intervillage social relationships.

In 1951 District Anthropologist Homer Barnett proposed that a new community house be built with the assistance of the South Pacific Commission in the capital town of Koror (Barnett 1951). This new community center was a significant departure from past community houses, in that it was to represent all Palauan communities. Hence, rather than the double-ended construction found in the village *bai*, at times dou-

bled in the chiefly double *bai* of the highest-ranking village, the new community center, called Kebtot el Bai (Twin Meetinghouse), was constructed with four gables, one pointing toward each of the four cardinal directions. The Kebtot el Bai was the community center for all of Palau, symbolically represented by the four gables, each associated with one of the four "cornerpost" village children of Milad. Part of the structure was open for meetings, another enclosed as a small museum. The structure was also unusual in that it was not reserved primarily for men but was also a meetinghouse for women's groups and for mixed meetings.

The Kebtot el Bai was destroyed by a typhoon in 1967. But soon after, a new community-wide traditional meetinghouse—the Bai ra Ngesechel ar Cherechar (Palau Museum Meetinghouse)—was constructed; it was dedicated in 1969. The construction of this *bai* more closely followed traditional social practices: it was constructed in Ngeremlengui by the elders of that village, Koror's "older brother," then as tradition dictated disassembled and transported to Koror where it was erected on the museum grounds (a nontraditional site for a *bai*). This *bai* was likened to "a wise old man relating stories of old. It tells you stories about each municipality in Palau district, from the northernmost island of Kayangel to the southernmost island, Tobi" (Sengebau 1969:9). The carvings were a conscious effort by Lorence Otaor, who was to take the highest chiefly Ngirturong title of Ngeremlengui, to record histories from each municipality (now state) on the gable and beams (Sengebau 1969:10–11). Unfortunately the Palau Museum *bai* was destroyed by fire 13 October 1979 (just before the second referendum on the Palau Constitution). (A new, traditionally styled museum *bai* was constructed on the museum grounds in 1991.)

Today the community-constructed meetinghouses have been replaced by modern cement and tin-roofed structures built on the old stone platforms. Although other villages attend the ritual openings and contribute token offerings, the major cost of construction is borne by state budgets (which are largely subsidized by U.S. government transfers). Only one village *bai* in the traditional wood and thatch-roofed style remains (see Figure 2 above). Today the sacred, male-oriented village *bai* (*bai el beluu*) have given way to more secular community meetinghouses. Whereas in the past the chiefly *bai* was reserved for meetings of the highest male council, today there is but one village *bai*, which serves as a meetinghouse for the entire community, often the men and women together in one building (albeit spatially separated).

There are a number of new community *bai*. The Palau Civic Center is a large, modern structure dominated by its large *bai*-like gable depict-

ing the story of the Breadfruit Tree. A modern clubhouse *bai*, the Bai er a Metal, was built in the mid-1970s to house the Koror young men's club Ngarametal. This large, double-gabled cement structure with thatched roof was built by Koror assisted by its allied villages, as it would have been in the past. It lacked interior gables, but the Koror histories were painted along ceiling beams of the inner cement walls. Like its predecessors it was not a chiefly but a young men's club *bai*, and it served the contemporary community not only as a meetinghouse for conventions but also as the place of evening relaxation—a place to dance or to hold the latest subset of the *ocheraol*, a “house party” to which young couples invite their friends to come and contribute sums of money for the construction of their new home. The more recently built Bai er a Melengel in Airai State and the Ngerkebesang Bai in Koror are modern cement structures modeled on the high-gabled form of the traditional *bai*, the former fully painted with motifs placed according to the *bai* grammar.

The *Bai* Today: National Icon, Individual Expression

Since the *bai* was the seat of chiefly power and the repository of local history, a study of the changes in the aesthetic locus over the years provides a study of changes in political power relationships and concepts of the ownership of history. Today, with the two exceptions of the Airai village *bai* and the museum meetinghouse, the traditional *bai* do not physically exist. Yet the *bai* gable has been taken over as the symbol of the Palauan polity. It is found on the national seal and on the seals of all governmental organizations and units (Figure 3). The *bai* has moved from being a symbol of the local community to one that stands for the nation of Palau and the essence of “being Palauan.”



FIGURE 3. Bai icon incorporated in government seals: (l-r) Koror State, Office of the President, and Supreme Court.

In the past *bai* gables and beams depicted contemporary events of the community—the arrival of foreigners on their sailing ships or World War II planes—as well as histories. In contrast, both the Airai *bai* and the Belau National Museum⁸ Bai ra Ngesechel ar Cherechar studiously avoid any non-Palauan incorporations and depict only events in Palau prior to the arrival of Captain Wilson. Only the stone pathways outside the Airai *bai* are allowed to carry more recent (1783) history—they are set in the shape of Captain Wilson's compass. The present is no longer incorporated, but the past is reified. There has been a contraction of both contemporary and traditional/mythical story-keeping through the medium of gable and beam carvings.

At the same time the artistic efforts of the community and use of histories and legends have shifted from a community orientation to that of the individual. Small, portable storyboards derived from the *bai* beam carvings are made by individual carvers for sale. In the past individual carvers would be renowned, their work decorating the most important community properties—the *bai*, the gods' houses, and the war canoes. Today individual carvers are well known, but for the most part they create individual pieces for their personal profit on commission or for sale to outsiders. The full chiefly histories are not known by the young carvers, and only a few public stories that form the smallest units of the full history are preserved in very condensed form on the modern storyboards. There are set motifs (the most common is the *bai* gable) and about thirty to fifty standard tales are represented in the commercial storyboards. Today individuals, and institutions of the new constitutional government, as well as chiefs, may interpret the past and the present. The trend in art as well as architecture is toward the individual rather than the community.

But storyboards continue to symbolize Palauan history and traditions from the past, as well as contemporary political messages and taunts. They will be given to a departing friend and visiting dignitaries, much as they were given to Semper in 1871 and the Krämers in 1910. In 1986, when U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz visited Palau, the carvers at Belau National Museum made two boards that the president of the Republic of Palau presented to him, each containing stories of symbolic import to Palau and messages concerning Palau's relationship to the United States. The first, The Double Cave of Oikuul, concerns two men, each living in caves, who specialized in making toddy and fish paste, respectively, and who each produced a surplus they discarded. Finally they realized their caves were separated only by a thin wall, which they scraped through so they could share (Krämer 1929: legend 142). The second, The Story of the Little Pied Cormorant and the Cat-

tle Egret Birds, teaches the moral "Control yourself, and just get enough to eat. Do not overdo it" (Kesolei 1975:3).

The construction of new *bai* and the appearance of the *bai* gable on government seals demonstrates the continued power of the *bai* as an aesthetic locus and symbol of the community. But, for the most part, the definition of community has shifted from the local to the national level. Once the locus of iconographic representation, today the traditional *bai* does not exist as a physical representation of the village's chiefly council on the stone platforms that incorporated the stone signs from the past. Rather, the *bai* is itself reduced to being an icon—the condensed sign of Palauan nationhood; and the *bai* logo of the national government today represents the constitutional government, not the house of the chiefs.

In his studies of Ngeremlengui, Milad's eldest son, Parmentier has argued that the sign tokens of the highest-ranking hierarchical terms have today disappeared from the context of social action, whether it be the house foundations or graves that previously validated the hierarchical ranking of the village cornerpost houses and their titleholders, or the village's *bai*, sacred stones, or traditional Palauan monies. Removed from the field of action, the hierarchy is thereby "frozen" or preserved from change, moved to a position of safety, becoming a "sign of history" but no longer a "sign in history" (Parmentier 1985b:147).

However, in Koror and throughout Palau today, the chiefly hierarchy and its signs and rankings remain in active process of transformation and substantiation (see Nero 1987). The paramount chief, the Ibedul, is the constitutionally mandated head of the State of Koror; the male chiefly council is the collective executive. The Ibedul has been a leader of the opposition to the Compact of Free Association with the United States. Following long-established traditions of politically motivated arson, one of the three orchestrated acts of violence over the compact issue in the summer of 1987 was the fiery destruction of the Koror young men's clubhouse, Bai er a Metal (Figure 4). Thus in Koror the *bai* and chiefly institutions continue to act as "signs in history," not removed to positions of symbolic safety and inaction.

From *Bai* Beam to Storyboard, to Paintings and Campaign Billboards: The Art of Opposition

Japanese anthropologist Hisakatsu Hidikata is generally credited with introducing to Palau the concept of storyboards, where the low-relief painted carvings of the *bai* beams are copied onto small, portable boards offered for sale as handicraft souvenirs (Figures 5 and 6). In fact, the initial concept was Palauan, for Sempem records that when he left



FIGURE 4. Shell of Bai er a Metal, Koror, 1988. (Photo by Karen L. Nero)

Palau in 1862, his friend and host Rechululd gave him beams that had literally been sawn from the *bai* in the community of Ngebuked where Semper had resided ([1873] 1982:280–281). In 1910, when German ethnographers Augustin and Elizabeth Krämer departed Koror, a special board was carved for them depicting the Dngeronger young men's club *bai* in which they had lived (see Figure 1)—complete with their table and pet dog (Krämer 1929).

Today the Palauan storyboard is ubiquitous—it is carved by men and even women, and offered for sale to the increasing numbers of tourists visiting the island, who are charmed by both the carvings and the stories that accompany them. The number of stories presented, however, has contracted; of the hundreds of stories of the past carved on *bai* beams, perhaps only thirty are frequently carved on storyboards today, with small photocopied summaries affixed to the back of the board (Lockhart 1985).

As Rechucher Charlie Gibbons of Koror aged and no longer carved storyboards, he moved to the medium of watercolors and became internationally famous as a painter of traditional Palauan scenes. The traditional *bai* figure prominently in his village scenes (Figure 7), representing the past that Palauans and their visitors dream about; the *bai* have

also been the subject of a series of oil paintings by contemporary Palauan artist Johnny "Itaru" Kishigawa.

It was an easy artistic transition from storyboards and paintings to the political campaign billboards that have adorned Koror streets during the political campaigns of the last two decades. Since 1975 Palauans have voted in no fewer than four referenda to establish a national constitution (including the Federated States of Micronesia Constitution rejected by Palau) and seven plebiscites on a Compact of Free Association with the United States. Each campaign has generated scores of political billboards.

In addition to establishing a form of government strongly modeled after that of the United States and incorporating individualistic fundamental rights, the Palau Constitution also set strong nuclear-free provisions, a two hundred-mile archipelagic-based territorial limit, and prohibition against the use of eminent domain for the benefit of a foreign entity. After a century of colonial domination by successive Spanish, German, Japanese, and American administrations, the new republic drew a strong line against outside interference and control in Palauan affairs. As the Constitution was being written and ratified, Palau at the same time was negotiating with the United States to achieve a new political status and terminate its U.N. trusteeship. A Compact of Free Association was negotiated, but the United States holds that the compact agreement cannot exist unless Palauans waive their Constitution's nuclear-free provision (to do so requires a 75 percent vote), on the grounds U.S. defense obligations to Palau could not be fulfilled without such waiver.

While the internal membership of "yes" and "no" factions has fluctuated, in each of the seven compact plebiscites active "yes" and "no" camps have used visual symbols of the Palauan past to evoke contemporary images of what being a Palauan should mean. Visions of the future under the two scenarios differ strikingly and serve as the counterpoint in the intense political campaigns of compact ratification. The most simplistic statement of the contrast, to which the visual media are sometimes reduced, is between an idyllic, independent, self-sufficient Palau and one overrun by U.S. military war games. The visual images of the "no" side often incorporate icons drawn from the *bai* or draw upon Palauan proverbs, in contrast with the images of the "yes" side in which Palau is depicted as wealthy and forward-moving because of its association with the United States. Or the "yes" side might emphasize its Palauan heritage through the image of a Palauan seated on a stone platform, the repository of history.



FIGURE 5. Interior of Bai er a Airai, crossbeams, 1991. (Photo by Karen L. Nero)

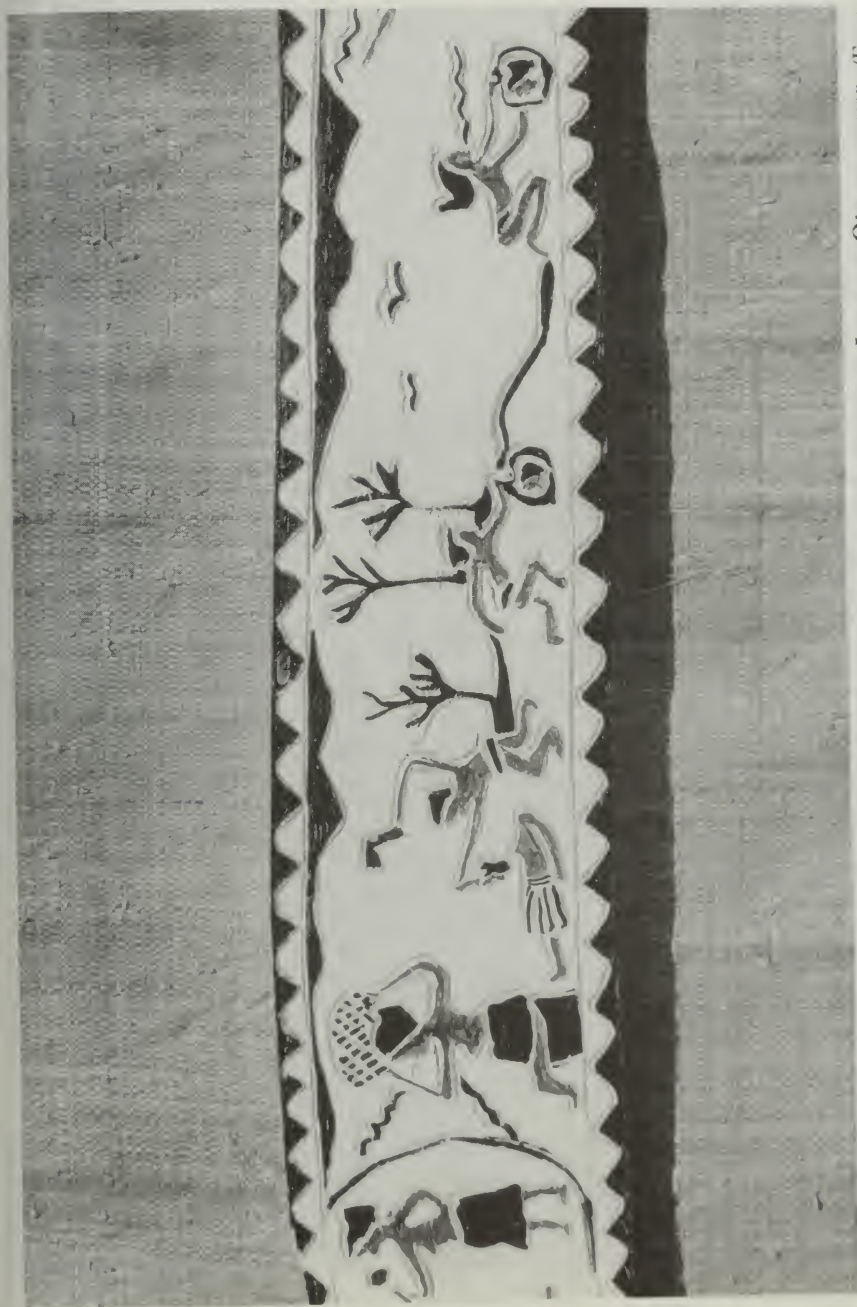


FIGURE 6. Storyboard modeled on traditional crossbeams, ca. 1980; Ngirturong Lorence Otaor, carver. (From the collection of Karen L. Nero)

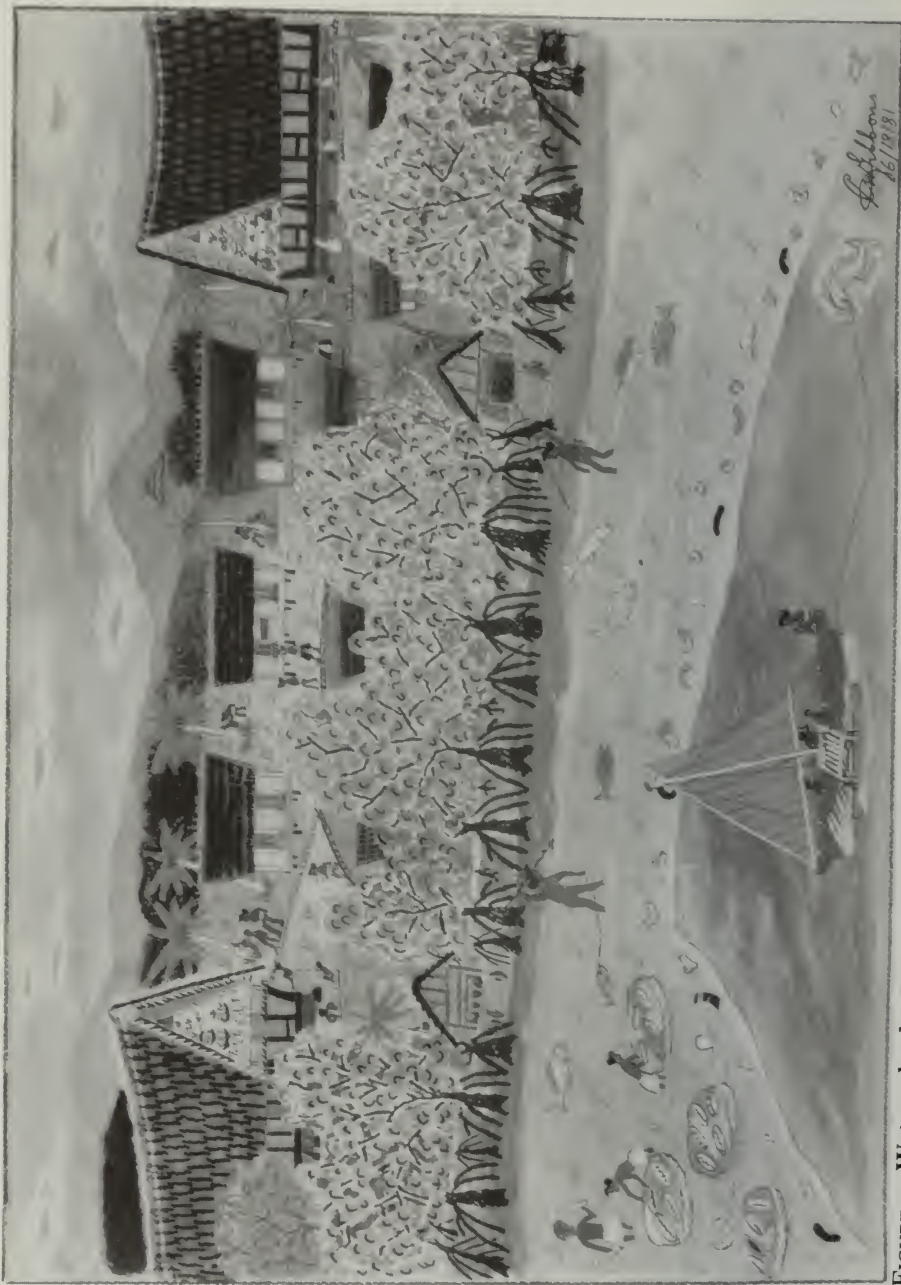


FIGURE 7. Watercolor by Rechucher Charlie Gibbons, traditional village with bai, 1981. (From the collection of Karen L. Nero)



FIGURE 8. Breadfruit Tree billboard, first plebiscite, 1983. (Photo by Karen L. Nero)



FIGURE 9. Oil painting by Samuel Adelbai, *Medad el Bai: Bo Domes er Ngii el Bai (The Bai of the Future)*, ca. 1988. (On display in Belau National Museum, Koror; reproduced courtesy of the museum)

One of the most striking visual images of the 1983 plebiscite campaign was a billboard prominently placed in Koror depicting a modern version of the Breadfruit Tree Story, with a breadfruit tree from which round money bags hung (an iconographic substitution for the round breadfruits), being happily harvested by a Palauan man in traditional loincloth (Figure 8). The images of the past—the Breadfruit Tree, the



FIGURE 10. Detail, *Medad el Bai*. (Reproduced courtesy of Belau National Museum)

man in loincloth (rarely worn in recent decades)—clearly set the Palauan in continuity with his past, although the ever-magical Breadfruit Tree had now sprouted the new, nongendered source of wealth in Palau—the U.S. dollar. The poster clearly supported the “yes” position, implying that great wealth would follow acceptance of the compact. Or did it? A viewer could also ponder an alternate question, whether it was as good to get dollars as to get free breadfruit and fish—as well as the relative “Palauanness” of the choice.

Contemporary artist Samuel Adelbai continues the artistic tradition. He combines painting and political commentary in an art of opposition, making explicit the antinuclear message of compact opponents in his recent oil painting on the *bai* theme, *Medad el Bai: Bo Domes er Ngii el Bai (The Bai of the Future)* (Figure 9). At first glance the painting depicts a traditional *bai*, yet a closer look reveals a series of iconographic substitutions of critical import. The chicken has been replaced by Pepsi cans, the god of construction by the Christian Jesus, replete with graphic crown of thorns. Replacing the outstretched limbs of the Breadfruit Tree of the traditional gable is the spreading mushroom cloud of a nuclear bomb explosion (Figure 10). This painting, which can be viewed inside the Belau National Museum, was offered as part of the Micronesian art exhibit at the United Nations, but was declined by the Trust Territory high commissioner.

Conclusion

Tracing the history of the construction of the Palauan *bai* through the last two centuries is an exercise demonstrating the ways artistic productions reflect changes in society. The elaborate, highest forms of these meetinghouses were once set aside for the powerful chiefly councils. They were once the islands' only painted and decorated buildings, the site of community feasts and dances. The houses and the stone platforms on which they rested were, through their chiefly explicators, once the repositories of history from the past to the present. Their gables and beams then depicted contemporary as well as past events, and often poked fun at a rival through the selection of a story embarrassing to that village.

Although the function of the *bai* as community meetinghouses is retained today, their form and patterns of utilization mirror modern transformations. Today all but two of the *bai* are constructed of modern tin, cement, and wooden materials; they hold meetings of all of the men, women, and children of the village and serve occasionally as dance or movie halls. No longer limited to use by the male chiefly few,

the *bai* reflects modern Palauan society with its emphases upon equality and individual rights, even though the power of males and elders is still evident in seating and speaking patterns within the *bai*.

Yet to treat the artistic productions and performances as simply reflective of transformations in Palauan society is to miss one of the major dynamics of Palauan art today. Billboards were used in the campaigns to persuade voters to vote in a particular way; they have the possibility of being effective persuasive agents because they are just billboards. In any social interaction, the verbal response to an argument generally relates more to the relationships between the two speakers and their families, and to relationships of power between the two, than to any true expression of political leaning, which may be very carefully guarded. This became especially evident as political and economic pressures climaxed in 1987 with the simultaneous murder of the father of the opposition lawyer, arson of the Koror Bai er a Metal, and bombing attack on the home of a Koror female elder. It was not safe to give voice to opposition. Positions were strongly held and unlikely to be changed through verbal exchanges, which were more likely to escalate into altercations. Yet a billboard was there for all to see, to read (or not to read) its possible messages, to combine the metaphors and reach back into the past to make meaning of the proverb or story depicted. The image and metaphors were there for individuals to reflect upon privately, perhaps to see the issues in a slightly different light than before. When it becomes dangerous to say things directly (see especially Hereniko's interview in this volume), artistry may offer a medium, in a field designated as "nonthreatening" and "playful," to say something through images that cannot be put into words.

Of course it's possible that no one's mind was changed by a few billboards—that they only served to lighten otherwise heated campaigns. One never knows. Nevertheless, the histories of the past, as exemplified by the Breadfruit Tree Story, continue to act as frames through which Palauans reinterpret and use their mythological past to achieve and validate contemporary positions of power.

NOTES

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Palau established both Palauan and English variants for the names of the nation and all states. Following national policy, I have used the English term, "Palau," rather than the Palauan, "Belau," except in proper names, to avoid bilingual hybrids such as "Belauan."

2. This article is based upon research conducted in Palau between 1979 and 1989 supported by NIMH Grant #5 T32 MH14640-04 0111 from the Institute for the Study of Social Change, University of California, the Palau Community Action Agency, the Koror

State Government, and the University of California—Irvine through the Robert Gumbiner Fund. I focus upon Koror, the current capital and home of two-thirds of Palau's residents, where I primarily conducted research.

3. There are a number of different types of *bai*. Traditionally, in the center of a town there would be two chiefly *bai* (or three in the most important towns), with separate type names in Palauan. At least one of these would have been ornately decorated with carved gables and beams. These were the chiefly *bai* of the village and its male councils, but the lesser one was also used to house visitors and could be taken over at times by the women for their meetings; hence the gloss "community meetinghouse." In addition, each of the men's clubs had its own *bai*, which might or might not be highly decorated. There were at least two, but more often six, of these for each village. Koror included the center and seven villages, each with chiefly and men's club *bai*.

4. Today Palau includes the states of Techobei and Sonsorol, whose people are culturally and linguistically distinct from Palauans, descended from settlers from the Outer Islands of Yap. Descriptions of the past political and cultural order refer to the islands of Palau proper, whereas the contemporary Palauan polity incorporates the people of these southern islands, many of whom have settled in Koror.

5. This is a particularly telling embedding of a new democratic institution in a chiefly, hierarchic past. The Olbiil era Kelulau is a bicameral house with representation both by state and by population on a one-person, one-vote model. Rather than an open, democratic house of debate and public inquiry, the image evoked of the "House of Whispers" is one of private consultations between high-ranking principals who reach secret agreements, which are encoded in multilayered language.

6. I have earlier likened the stories and their interrelationships to the pieces of Palauan bead money, which at times could be strung into *iek* (necklaces) (Nero 1987:20–21). During the past two decades there have been a number of serious efforts to record and compile the oral histories. Kesolei headed a Palau History Project at the Palau Community Action Agency (PCAA), which published two volumes of legends (Kesolei 1971, 1975) as well as a three-volume study of Palau's history (PCAA 1976–1978). Steve Umetaro of the Department of Education has published a legendary history (1974), and the Palau Division of Cultural Affairs is compiling another three-volume history. In some cases an assumption that there is or should be one overall text of Palauan oral history has led to difficulties of interpretation.

7. I would like to acknowledge insights gained during long and fruitful discussions with DeVerne Reed Smith on the nature, content, order, and clustering of key cultural principles in Palau, the topic of Smith's 1989 research to create a "cultural typology" of Palau for the Palau historic preservation office under the auspices of the Micronesian Endowment for Historic Preservation.

8. The 1783 shipwreck of the *Antelope* under Captain Henry Wilson was the first extended recorded European visit to Palau (Keate 1803). The men spent three months in Palau under the protection of the Ibedul of Koror (and assisting him in his local battles in return) while constructing a ship from the wreckage. Before this small ship, the *Oroolong*, could set sail in 1783, the high chief of Koror insisted that his lieutenant decorate the bow of the small ship with the symbol of Palauan money. This same symbol is found on the Palauan war canoe of Ngesesar State, built in 1979.

9. In 1983 the name of the Palau Museum was officially changed to the Belau National Museum, reflecting pride in local identity and the national Constitution.

**"PLANEM FAMILY BLONG IU":
POSTER ART IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Judith Fitzpatrick
University of Queensland

If I have more children, I'll just plant more food to feed them.
There's more land.

—A rural respondent, quoted in Gegeo 1987:97

Small family will destroy the Solomon Island way of life. It
[National Population Policy] is a white conspiracy.

—Provincial government official, 1988

Already many of our children are unable to attend school
because of the lack of room in existing schools. And not all of
those who are at school will be able to reach higher secondary
standard for the same reason—*there are more children needing
places than what we can afford to provide.*

—Prime Minister the Honorable Ezekiel Alebua
(1988:3; emphasis added)

Solomon Island government officials estimate that their country's population will double to total over six hundred thousand by the year 2006 and that it may exceed one million in less than forty years (see Figure 1). Recent calculations indicate a 3.7 percent per annum growth rate, one of the highest in the Pacific (McMurray and Lucas 1990:2). Consequently, health policy makers in the Solomon Islands during the 1980s pushed hard for a national population policy (SIMHMS:1988). Prior to 1988 legislation there was no clear policy, and on occasion the govern-

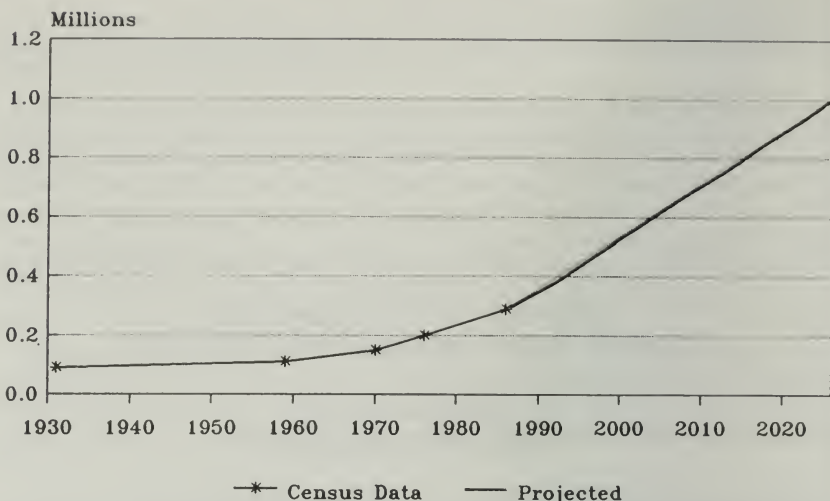


FIGURE 1. Population growth for the Solomon Islands. Censuses taken 1931, 1959, 1970, 1976, 1986; projected 1 million people by 2026. (Source: Data from SICO 1988; compiled by J. Fitzpatrick and S. Forsyth)

ment had firmly opposed family planning (Lloyd and Winn 1985). The lack of an official policy may have been the result of a perceived link between foreign influence and genocide and neocolonialism, as has been insinuated elsewhere (Mazrui and Mugambwa 1986; Warwick 1982).

The political context of population policy and how it influences poster art in the Solomon Islands is the focus of this article. Examples of posters are presented, and their messages are deconstructed. Social marketing suggests that visual images have the potential to promote change in society. In posters about family planning—*Planem Family Blong Iu*, or Plan Your Family—artistic constructions of the ideal “healthy family” predominate in the Solomon Islands (cf. Frederiksen, Solomon, and Brehony 1984). The poster art contains multifarious messages: ethnic hegemony, urban class bias, Western models of scarcity, international donor priorities, and foreign artistic representations.

Artistic productions created to serve as health education messages actively attempt to effectuate change. But what and whose messages do they carry? Are the projected changes related to public health or to a government policy influenced by international models of economic growth and development? And how are these messages perceived by Solomon Islanders?

Population Policy

The implementation of a new population policy for the Solomon Islands is a formidable task in the diverse cultural setting of this fourteen-year-old independent nation-state. The government ratification of a fertility regulation policy and the availability and easy access to Western contraception techniques cannot alone curb the high population growth. Why? Part of the explanation lies in the overwhelming cultural bias toward fertility; as in other parts of the world and the Pacific generally, large families are a prominent cultural ideal (see Frankel 1985; Handwerker 1986; Simmons 1988).

What forces are causing overpopulation in the Pacific Islands? Is population growth a natural correlate of modernization and economic growth? Will the process slow down once a majority of the population adopts a more Western life-style? These questions are asked repeatedly for developing countries. Publicity about the population explosion in the Third World has drawn attention to the possible economic disadvantages of rapid population growth. International agencies and lending countries often attach population policies to economic growth plans.¹ Debate among demographers and economists, and more recently in conservation and development circles, regarding population explosion, resource depletion, and economic growth fills the journals, but still there is no absolute proof that economic growth proceeds faster with a reduction in the total fertility rate (see Greenhalgh 1990; Handwerker 1986). In fact, it is still not clear exactly what factors are most critical for a reduction in fertility (see Cleland and Hobcraft 1985; Levine and Schrimshaw 1983; Polgar 1971). Culture, however, has an immediate impact on reproductive decisions and without a doubt "impinges on every aspect of population policy, from the initial awareness of population as an issue to client perceptions of the services offered" (Warwick 1982:106).

Population policies worldwide reflect government recognition of the need to control the number of children born. But programs designed by foreigners with little attention to national culture policy may by definition create opposition (Gordon 1978; Warwick 1982). The situation in the Pacific Islands today mirrors difficulties encountered by early proponents of birth control elsewhere (see Ward 1986). According to Reed, these pioneers "had to work within the value systems of the societies they sought to change because their programs required the support of government and professional elites. . . . The changes required in order to deliver contraceptive services to everyone were revolutionary"

(1983:370). The role and status of women, the value of children, changes in family structure and sexual mores, and access to equitable medical services and information about modern contraceptives by isolated or rural poor in the Third World are some of the social issues that until very recently have been ignored by international foreign-aid donors in the realm of development and family planning.

The medicalization of family planning removed it from the politically volatile area of changing social values. As overpopulation came to be considered a kind of disease in itself "to be treated by a pill or a coil" (Davis 1967:737), family planning became socially and politically less threatening. Individual human rights, that is, choice by the individual in the voluntary use of family planning services, are a necessary correlate to population policy. Even though apparent success stories in terms of reduction in fertility rates and increasing numbers of acceptors, China and India provide poignant examples of the denial of individual rights in government-sponsored, enforced population policies (see Brown 1984; Gordon 1978; Li 1984). Elsewhere in Asia, according to Hull, in countries as different as the Philippines and Vietnam, "[the] government claims the right to determine the range and accessibility of birth control technologies and de facto the government and not the individual couple is planning the family" (1990:3).

Generally, once population policies have been formulated by a central government, they are channeled through the national health bureaucracy and implemented through vertical programs dependent upon the authority of national administrators. In numerous cases, family planning programs have not been implemented because donor agencies and international advisers have favored centralized decision making and ignored participation by community-level groups (Warwick 1982:38–39). The top-down approach has proven unsatisfactory because knowledge and sensitivity about local issues are masked and general models imported from outside are not applicable.

A typical health bureaucracy, the Solomon Islands Ministry of Health and Medical Services (SIMHMS), located in the capital, Honiara, administers clinic-based health services and public health activities. Its Health Education Division is concerned with modifying behavior and addresses a range of public health matters, including family planning.² A goal of this division is the dissemination of health promotion messages utilizing a variety of media.

In the Solomon Islands, posters provide a relatively inexpensive and technologically simple means of communicating to the country's disparate, geographically dispersed, and primarily rural population. A popular medium in a country without television, posters are distributed to all

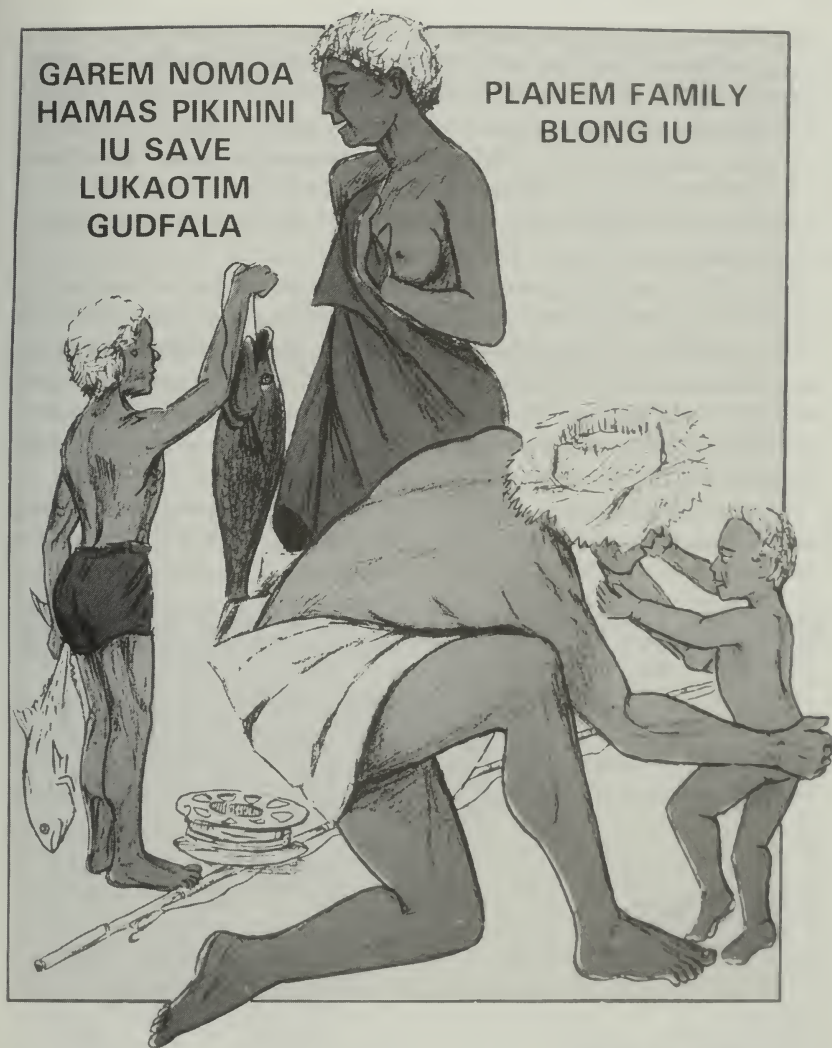


FIGURE 2. "Plan Your Family": a poster of a mother and father with two children on the beach, 1986. (Source: Health Education Division, SIMHMS, Honiara)

rural health clinics. Information about malaria control, the expanded program for immunization, nutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, and family planning are conveyed through artistic constructions of health messages (see Figure 2).

There are two major sources for health education posters in the Solo-

mon Islands. The World Health Organization (WHO), which has a country office in Honiara and a regional office in Fiji, produces and distributes health-related posters. Figure 3 characterizes this agency's approach and attempt to impose a culturally neutral style to health topics.³ One wonders how an illiterate rural farming couple might interpret the WHO-style rendering of infant mortality statistics. The other major source of health education poster art is the SIMHMS Health Education Division (see Figure 2 above).

The point here is not to evaluate the displayed posters or analyze the effectiveness of the posters for health education objectives. Instead, I wish to provide an anthropological commentary on the broad sociopolitical context of artistic representations, in this case focusing on materials utilized for health promotion, especially family planning. This article highlights messages about population issues in view of their diversity of artistic construction and political implications.

It is assumed that artistic productions created to serve as health education messages actively attempt to effect change—whether this means

SPACING BIRTHS REDUCES DEATH

Source: WHO Survey of 6,000 Women in a developing country

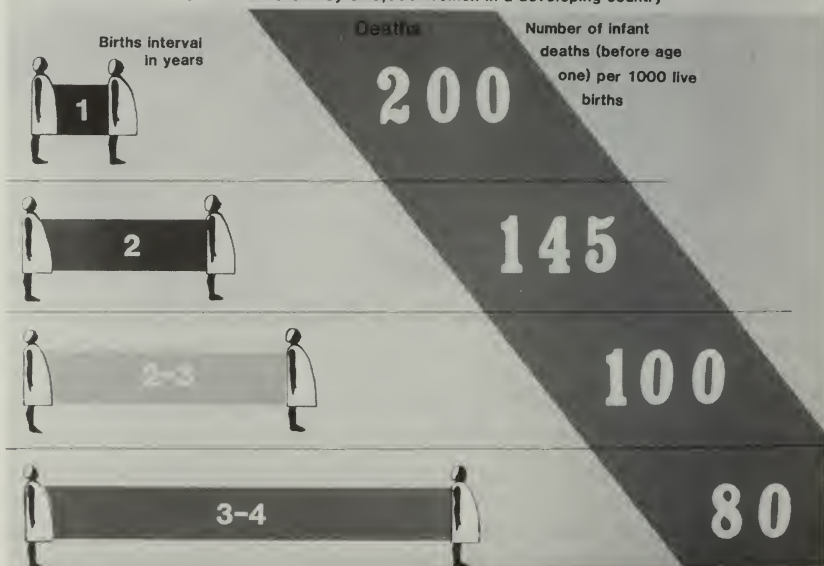


FIGURE 3. A poster illustrating the relationship between infant mortality and birth spacing, n.d. (Source: WHO)

reducing family size or, in the case of malaria control, using a mosquito bednet. In many cases, however, as the posters demonstrate, the intended message is obscured or misrepresented. We might question whether it is the artistic representation that creates the ambiguity or whether the messages are inherently unclear.

The argument developed here is that health is far from a value-free domain. Health messages in poster art are often derived from Western models. They are not apolitical but typically represent special interests and involve proselytizing by a dominant group. The urban elite, often partially assimilated to Western norms, are potentially responsive to the ethos of population planning (Mazrui and Mugambwa 1986:355–356). Poster art pertaining to family planning assessed in this article does not reflect the existing social structure of the majority of Solomon Islanders. Rather it conveys an external morality and offers constructs of the family imported from European demographic ideals, fortified by statistics from epidemiology (see Figures 2 and 3). The experts are defining social policy for the public, and they use the small family “as a model for all people, regardless of other economic and psychologic needs, and without relating family size to overall quality of life” (Gordon 1978:177). In theory, health education materials are meant to communicate information about health issues, but in practice they partake of political discourse through ambiguous messages. Thus, consideration of the language of representation—the artistic constructions in poster art that impart messages about population issues to the public—is essential in interpreting problems of cross-cultural health communication and education.

Social marketing, used increasingly in public health, is based on the assumption that visual images have the potential to promote change in society (see Manoff 1985). The posters reproduced in this article were created with specific health messages in mind; nonetheless the artistic constructions are multidimensional. That is, the posters in question cannot be seen as isolated artistic expressions but must be interpreted within contemporary sociopolitical contexts, particularly with respect to emerging nationalism, population dynamics, cultural identity formations, and Solomon Island family planning programs.

The Solomon Islands Case

The Solomon Islands nation comprise six main islands and a scattering of small islands and atolls with historically distinct cultures and diverse environments. The majority of the population today is still organized in

small, rural-based village economies oriented toward subsistence gardening, fishing, or both. Solomon Islanders prefer large families, often of eight or more children. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, "blackbirders" plundered the communities and kidnaped laborers for the sugar plantations of Queensland. During World War II, some islands, especially Guadalcanal, were devastated by the Allies and the Japanese (see McMurray and Lucas 1990:13–15). A locally perceived population decline from these events and a high infant mortality rate until quite recently have contributed to the continuing high value on fertility. Postwar public health action programs resulted in the reduction of both maternal and child mortality. Jointly, these reductions in mortality have greatly affected current annual rates of population growth. Although mortality has been reduced, high morbidity from malaria continues to plague the country at a rate that is probably higher than during the nineteenth century. Migration, resulting in part from population growth, has been escalating since the 1950s and is a major factor contributing to the expansion of endemic malaria (N. Kere, pers. com., Honiara, 1990). Wage labor, educational opportunities, and the city lights draw young people, particularly males, in ever-increasing numbers away from the villages, where land is increasingly in short supply, to provincial capitals and to Honiara, the country's modernizing urban enclave and national capital. Yet, in the city the rural life-style is romanticized; the urban elite view their rural homelands as places to return for relaxation, recreational leave, and retirement.

In the Pacific generally, nationalistic public tradition is often defined in artistic terms. Lindstrom points out such a trend in Papua New Guinea where, to stabilize the country as a whole, cultural identity is being unified for nationalistic purposes (1992). In the Solomon Islands, the national government attempts as well to construct a national cultural identity out of diversity. A variety of traditions and customary practices persist—distinguished by geography, language, culture, and phenotype—and are promoted by government, I suggest, as a way of developing unity through diversity (cf. Lindstrom 1992; White 1991). The distinctive art forms expressed in dance performances, handicraft production, and canoe construction for races are encouraged at events such as the Tenth Independence Anniversary Celebrations recently held in Honiara (Fitzpatrick 1988). As in other parts of Oceania a collective identity, comprising pieces of custom from the numerous culture groups, is marketed for tourists and exported by the government (see Linnekin 1990:158). The country's eight provinces,⁴ which include at least eighty language and culture groups, are symbolically represented through artistic constructions in the form of logos (see Figure 4).



FIGURE 4. Logos representing each of the provinces of the Solomon Islands. These popularly used symbolic representations of the various island culture traditions were created by graphic artists for *Link* magazine, produced by the nonprofit organization Solomon Island Development Trust (generally referred to by its acronym, SIDT). This publication, distributed throughout the islands, presents information about development issues and promotes grass-roots organizing in the rural sector. (Source: *Link*)

Regional differences do exist, however, and they present a challenge for national government. Since independence there has been an ongoing debate over provincial versus national formulation of policy and control of finances, resources, and services. Politicians at the national level emphasize unity and working together. Yet on a pragmatic level they cannot ignore the significance of the diversity and the problems inherent in the varying social histories and the vast geographic distances between islands. Indeed, national politicians strongly identify with their home communities and are often accused of having conflicting allegiances. From extensive observation in the Solomons, White is optimistic about emerging nationalistic identity in suggesting that the contemporary social environment “breeds a new kind of cultural pragmatism that values local identity while actively seeking out and incorporating new knowledge” (1991:58).

Variation in population size and density and resource availability creates differences in development potential among the already culturally diverse provinces. For the country as a whole, the population density is ten persons per square kilometer, but some provinces such as Mala'ita have nearly twenty persons per square kilometer (SISO 1989:14). This density difference leads to variation in migration patterns, age structures, and local perceptions about land scarcity. In the Pacific as a whole, available land is restricted, and in the Solomons the capacity for intensification of subsistence and cash cropping is limited by rapid increases in population density, which vary by island and province. Furthermore, customary land and sea ownership continues to be an obstacle, among some culture groups, to large-scale government-initiated development projects (see Gegeo 1991). Yet, in some areas com-

mercial logging and plantation agriculture have put pressure on land and food production.

Many politicians, as noted earlier, are aware that health and education services are not keeping pace with current population growth. Even though the majority of Solomon Islanders, rural village residents, still perceive their local environment to be expansive and not more densely populated than in the past, they too notice current pressure on government services. They speak out about the need for school seats for their children and good quality, accessible local health facilities. A recent editorial in a local magazine expressed the view that "beyond certain limits our human resources cease to be an asset and are a liability" (SIDT 1989:8). In actuality, the more remote populations are receiving fewer services; and out-migration by young people, particularly to Honiara, is accelerating (SICB 1988). In this situation, it is understandable that the national government would use rapid population growth as an explanation for a lack of adequate health and education services, a shortage of pharmaceuticals, and deficiencies in other basic services: "The fundamental problem confronting the Solomon Islands in the 1990s is that population growth is outrunning both the formal monetary economy's ability to provide employment and the government's capacity to provide social and administrative services" (PIM 1989:32). Warwick makes the point that in the Third World, however, "it does not necessarily follow that a reduction in the birth rate will spur more economic growth or increase public services" (1982:34).

Actual population size and ethnic composition by province is presented in Table 1. Not surprisingly, there are representatives from all provinces and distinct ethnic groups resident in Honiara, which more than doubled its population between 1976 and 1986 (SISO 1989:9). Even with recent trends in rural-urban migration (Connell 1983), the Solomon Island population remains predominantly rural with barely 15 percent resident in urban areas including provincial capitals such as Gizo, Auki, and Kira Kira (SISO 1989:10).

By far the majority of Solomon Islanders (94 percent) are Melanesian (see Table 1). For census purposes, ethnic divisions are broadly defined: Melanesian, Polynesian, Kiribati (or Gilbertese), and "Other" (a catch-all category used here to include Chinese, Europeans, other Asians, and other Pacific Islanders whose citizenship is enumerated on the 1986 census). Locally, however, social identity is defined much more discretely through identification with a particular place, language group, or social and cultural community. For instance, people from Anuta, Tikopia, or Ontong Java (on their home islands as well as in Honiara) see

TABLE 1. Solomon Island Population by Province and Ethnic Groups, 1986

	Melanesian		Polynesian		Kiribati		Other		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mala'ita	78,240	97.74	1,672	2.09	22	0.03	98	0.15	80,032	28.07
Western	52,106	94.31	220	0.40	2,554	4.62	370	0.67	55,250	19.37
Guadalcanal	49,086	98.50	325	0.65	242	0.49	178	0.36	49,831	17.47
Honiara ^a	26,255	86.33	2,032	6.68	871	2.86	1,255	4.13	30,413	10.66
Makira	21,243	97.50	506	2.32	14	0.06	25	0.11	21,788	7.64
Central	15,304	82.92	2,897	15.70	157	0.85	99	0.54	18,457	6.47
Isabel	14,450	98.86	91	0.62	62	0.42	13	0.09	14,616	5.13
Temotu	11,847	80.15	2,918	19.74	7	0.05	9	0.06	14,781	5.18
Total	268,531	94.16	10,661	3.74	3,929	1.38	2,047	0.72	285,168	99.99

Source: Data from SISO 1988; compiled by J. Fitzpatrick and S. Forsyth.

^aHoniara is treated here as a unit comparable to Solomon Island provinces.

themselves as belonging to distinct groups even though they are officially enumerated within the category "Polynesian." Similarly, "Melanesian" as a census category incorporates diverse population groups from Makira, Mala'ita, Isabel, Choiseul, and Guadalcanal. Each of these major islands is subdivided into numerous culture or language groups, such as the Kwaio, Kwara'ae, Lau, and 'Are'Are on Mala'ita. Developing these categorizations along geographic, political, and cultural lines involves many overlapping criteria. The extreme ethnic variability common in contemporary Melanesia inhibits political consensus in defining national priorities and discourages the development of a common language of presentation for health promotion and health education messages.

Identity markers, especially within the urban context, also include phenotype, language, place of birth or residence, religious affiliation, and dress. In Honiara, small peri-urban enclaves have developed comprising individuals from specific rural areas, cultural communities, or language groups. Many of Honiara's thirty thousand inhabitants reside in these ethnically defined neighborhoods. Place of employment and church attendance cut across these urban groupings, creating opportunities for other social categories of identity.

Historically, religious denominations were associated with particular regions as a result of missionization. Today, for the country as a whole,

they are spread more evenly across ethnic and geographic boundaries. Five major Christian churches encompass 91 percent of the population, suggesting the high social value placed on church membership. In the past, education and health services were provided by the various missions, resulting in uneven distribution of these services and the formation of new settlements near particular churches. Today, church-run schools and hospitals funded by foreign sources work together with government-run institutions to provide communities with services. As one would expect, health education, particularly application of the new population policy, has been greatly influenced by the philosophies and practices of individual churches in communities. Dominant church affiliation, which varies at the community and provincial levels, also affects present-day social and political organization at the village level. Some denominations exert a strong political voice and control local attitudes about population policy in the rural areas. Nevertheless, national church leaders agreed that the population problem needs to be addressed by the SIMHMS (Fitzpatrick 1990). This development is a lucid example of how the medicalization of family planning allows the social and cultural issues to be sidestepped within the public arena.

In Honiara and the provincial capitals, language is a common marker of identity. Speakers of the same language community are referred to as *wontok*. Because most Solomon Islanders use a local vernacular as their first language, communication between language groups takes place in Pijin (Solomon Island Pidgin) or standard English. The national radio station, Solomon Island Broadcasting Company (SIBC), broadcasts in Pijin and English, repeating messages, often switching language in mid-sentence for clarity. Bureaucrats report that there are low literacy rates for the rural areas of the country; the 1986 census found that almost 40 percent of the population over ten years of age had no formal education (SISO 1989:v). "Females clearly did not have the same opportunities to be trained as males," according to the census report. "The number of uneducated females greatly exceeds the males" (SISO 1989:165). Thus, many people, but particularly rural females, are unable to read either English or Pijin. Television programing, which could serve as a means of broader language acquisition in either Pijin or English, is unavailable in the Solomon Islands, although video cassette players are becoming more common in urban households.

Health education materials are generally written in English or Pijin; rarely, if at all, are they written in local vernaculars (the posters reproduced here are quite ordinary with respect to language and format). Consequently, the effectiveness of the written language used in poster

art in the Solomon Islands is problematic, whether it is Pijin as depicted in Figure 2 or standard English as shown in Figure 5.

Fertility Regulation

Not too Soon

Not too Late

Not too Close

Not too Many

—Planned Parenthood jingle, 1989

Prior to the newly instituted national policy on population (SIMHMS 1988), a small but determined group of individuals promoted fertility regulation as members of the Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association (SIPPA). The radio jingle quoted above emphasizes not birth control but birth spacing, which was part of a health promotion strategy that existed prior to the passage of the new policy. Western methods of contraception, in particular the condom, have been available at least since World War II, and traditional methods of contraception, still not well documented, have existed for centuries (see Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo 1985).

The 1960s and 1970s were active years for international population planning campaigns in some Pacific Island nations. The Solomon Islands, however, did not appear to exhibit rapid population growth rates, and the postindependence government was extremely pronatalist (McMurray and Lucas 1990). Therefore, donors remained indifferent to large-scale population control programs in the Solomons. Gegeo (1987) has studied the role of mass communication in the promotion of family planning in the Solomon Islands and examined in detail the operations of SIPPA, which commenced in 1973.⁵ Until 1986, operational funding was derived primarily from the International Planned Parenthood Federation; later funding was sought through the United Nations. Planned Parenthood “long clung to a policy of offering birth control services only to married women” (Gordon 1978:177), and this policy is extant in the Solomon Islands today.

SIPPA, based in Honiara, provided a broad spectrum of services, from advising to sterilization, and depended upon the Medical Department at Number Nine, the national central hospital, for referrals of gynecological complications (Gegeo 1987). Nonetheless, from all indications during its first ten years in operation the impact of SIPPA activities on total fertility rates was minimal. Some researchers suggest that

MORE CHILDREN
means **LESS of**
EVERYTHING



Plan your family

FIGURE 5. A poster of a family using Papua New Guinea-style cartoon characters, n.d. (Source: Health Education Division, SIMHMS, Honiara)

“its success was limited owing to the unfavourable government stand on family planning” (McMurray and Lucas 1990:14).

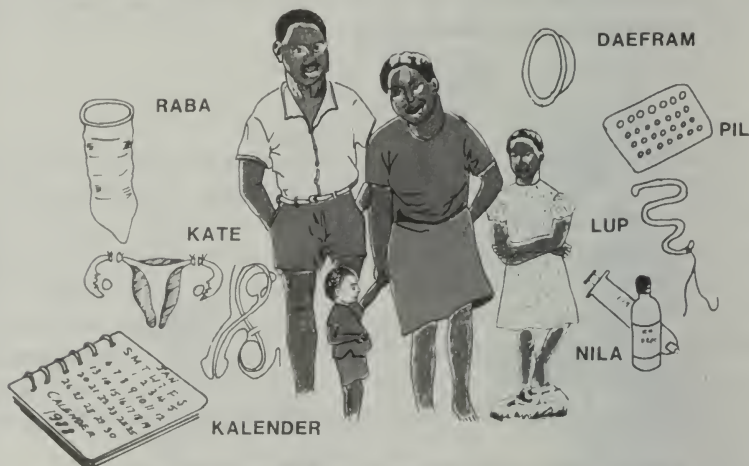
It continues to be difficult to document the effectiveness of SIPPA, now part of the newly formed intersectoral standing committee, SIMHMS Family Planning Monitoring and Evaluating Committee.⁶ According to the new National Population Policy (SIMHMS:1988; SIMHMS 1990), this committee's functions include overseeing the implementation of the new policy; developing teaching and educational materials (a new curriculum in the Honiara-based nurses' training course is being created during 1991–1992); and developing and implementing closer ties among all of the various committees, nongovernment organizations, and government offices.⁷ No specific mention is made in the text of the policy with regard to continuing production and distribution of health promotion posters.

Poster Messages

Overall, posters produced prior to the implementation of the new population policy contain ambiguous and mixed messages. Artistic constructions of the nuclear family—specifically, the two-child family—and ethnic identity both figure strongly in the poster art. Figure 6 provides yet another view of the imported image of the two-child family. The dominant ethnic group is represented here rather than an ambiguous phenotypic family, as illustrated in Figure 2, or a cartoon characterization of a family, as depicted in Figure 5. Furthermore, from their dress this family appears more urban as compared to the families in Figures 2 and 5.

Posters such as Figure 6 also impart technical knowledge to the viewer. The facts are encapsulated in the Pijin words and the illustrations. Promotion of the medicalization of family planning is a predominant theme. The illustrations of various Western contraception methods have no information about who should use which method, how to use any of the methods, or, in general, how they work. Self-help is not part of the message; instead, the message emphasizes the medical aspect of using contraception by directing the viewer to “go to the nurse who knows how to help you” (*go stori long nes, hem save helpim iu*). “Space your children, plan your family, stop having children, and do not give birth every year” are other messages written in Pijin on the poster displayed in Figure 6. We might speculate that these people represent an urban family who are “masters” of the complex medicalization presented around them and who apparently have been successful in having only two children.

FO MEKIM FAMILI BLONG IU STAP GUD
NO WAKIM PIKININI EVRI IA



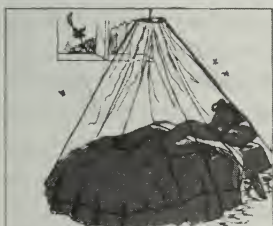
FO SPESIM PIKININI BLONG
IU, IU MAS IUSIN FAMILI
PLANING. GO STORI LONG
NES, HEM SAVE HELPIN IU.

FIGURE 6. A poster of a two-child family with modern contraception devices, 1986. (Source: Health Education Division, SIMHMS, Honiara)

DON'T LET **MALARIA** CATCH YOU



JOENIM KAMPEIN FO DAONIM MALARIA



**SLIP ANDANIT MOSKITO
NET EVRI NAET.**



**LETEM SPREIMAN FO
SPREIM HAOS BLONG IU.**



**KAYAM ENI RAVIS WATA
KOLSAP LONG HAOS, NO
LETEM MOSKITO LEI EG**



**TAEM IU GAREM FIVA
AN HEDEK, GO LONG
KLINIK FO TEKEM BLAD**



**GO TEKEM BLAD FO
TESTIM FO MALARIA
LONG BODI BLONG IU.**



**TEKEM FAMILI FO
M.D.A.**

FIGURE 7. A poster illustrating steps to take control of malaria, 1986.
(Source: Health Education Division, SIMHMS, Honiara)

Figure 7 provides a contrasting approach to the dissemination of technical information in poster art. Self-help is combined with professional assistance; demystification of a public health problem is promoted. In this case, the topic of health promotion is not population control but malaria control. Written information about the procedures to join in the campaign to control malaria is presented in story form rather than in an abstract, multifarious pictorial presentation as typified by Figure 6. Instead, in Figure 7 each boxed illustration pictorializes the written Pijin words. True, social and cultural sensitivities surrounding malaria control are different from population control concerns. I suggest, however, that the contrast with the family planning poster design reflects ambiguity in past policy directives on population.

Poster Art as Visual Discourse

Health promotion posters in the Solomon Islands are a form of visual discourse. Produced mostly at the national level, they advance relevant public health issues for both rural and urban populations. The posters do not target particular audiences but instead assume a notion of collective identity. However, it is difficult to discern a Solomon Islander national identity within the diverse images and mixed messages presented in the posters, and I question whether there is such a thing at this time in the Solomon Islands. Although the central government promotes such an identity from among the diversity, a collective identity remains something idealized. And it is certainly not realized in the posters examined here.

Yet there are commonalities to all the posters. Single women or men apparently do not have children—only couples are targeted for family planning. It is necessary to be literate to some degree, either in Pijin or in English, to fully understand the poster messages. This dependence on literacy is a selective process that favors the urban dwellers (15 percent of the population) who reside in Honiara and other provincial capitals. There is debate among media experts regarding the relevance of literacy and the use of the written word and pictures in health promotion posters and print media, especially in Third World countries. The notion that illiterate populations can be communicated to entirely through pictures may be a myth. "Words, in the end, are the *sine qua non* of communication. Pictures also require their own form of literacy—graphics literacy, if you will—the ability to translate the picture into the reality it is meant to symbolize" (Manoff 1985:213).

Figure 5 is an example of a poster with a set of mixed messages need-

ing both literacy and “graphics literacy” for interpretation. The man, apparently the father, is depicted holding cash in one hand and a basket of food in the other. What does this mean? Is it “less of everything” as the poster claims? Are the children supposed to be hungry? The role of the woman, presumably the mother, is also unclear. One wonders whom these people are supposed to represent anyway. To me, an outside observer, the poster appears condescending. In sum, it is difficult to ascertain what the messages are in this poster. They are ambiguous not only in the text but also visually, and they ultimately create more questions than they can answer.

Phenotype in the Solomon Islands is an overt identity marker, whereas in the posters it is often covert and deliberately left uncertain. Is the family in Figure 5 representative of a Solomon Island phenotypic national identity? In fact, the cartoon characterizations are from Papua New Guinea. Solomon Islanders undertake art training at the University of Papua New Guinea Art School in Port Moresby and apparently incorporate the PNG-style characters in illustrations for health promotion at home. These characterizations may be appropriate stereotypic portrayals of in-group features for Papua New Guineans but not for Solomon Islanders (see also Graburn 1976:29).

Figure 2 romanticizes rural life; a two-child family is fishing on the beach. Their phenotype is obscure, perhaps Polynesian, even Caucasian. What is the target population for this poster? Polynesians, who make up less than 4 percent of the total population (see Table 1), are a minority. It is true that the atolls of Tikopia and Ontong Java are severely overcrowded and many individuals have had to migrate to Honiara, but the poster in Figure 2 is distributed throughout rural health units in all provinces, even those without resident Polynesians.

The model of the two-child family, readily adopted by the creators of these materials, contradicts all other public discourses about the family in the Solomon Islands. Politicians, such as the past prime minister Alebua, who has seven children, have large families. In the urban centers some young couples, who are starting to have smaller families, are pitied, not admired. Large families are idealized and considered by many to be Solomon Island custom.

It is useless to ask people to “stop at two” for the sake of national development. . . . As long as . . . any form of population education conflicts with dictates of self-interest, then it is obvious that the latter will prevail. People will only start to want small families when the costs of rearing more than two or

three children begin to exceed the benefits. The overall process of development acts as a contraceptive by pushing up the costs and reducing the benefits. (Warwick 1982:200)

We might ask, however, whether the process of development will in fact act as a contraceptive over the long run in the Solomon Islands. The assumptions underlying Warwick's perspective may in the Solomons case prove faulty.

What is communicated in health education materials—what I refer to as visual discourse and what Lindstrom calls “public tradition” (1992)—is very often based on political priorities and assumptions that may not always be pertinent to individuals' health. And even where the messages are relevant to health goals, they may not be culturally appropriate for individual communities. Information is being exchanged through artistic representations, and like art in contexts outside of health, it often has a political agenda.

In the Solomon Islands there is a push by the central government to reduce the population growth rate and to create a national identity within a diverse population. Combining these two agendas in the promotion of family planning may prove a formidable task. Perhaps it is not feasible. Even though health education materials have been produced locally, it is questionable whether indigenous etiologies are being recognized. In particular, inappropriate models from the West are being utilized in communication about the family and identity (Harrison 1983). Bunnag, a consultant for the U.N. Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), in a general discussion of the appropriateness of Western media models, states that “the major difficulties have arisen from the indiscriminate borrowing of western (mass) media models for family planning communication programmes. . . . These media models have not typically been concerned to establish a dialogue with the audience—without which communication cannot take place” (1986:216).

Conclusions

The Solomon Islands were overlooked during the heyday of international promotion in family planning. Nonetheless, some health-trained Solomon Islanders—influenced by literature from the local family planning association, WHO, UNFPA and other U.N. agencies or educated abroad in Western biomedicine and epidemiology—along with occasional consultants succeeded in stimulating local concern about popula-

tion issues. Prior to advocating an official policy, the government was not ready to sanction promotion of family planning. There was resistance by the churches, the politicians, and the urban elite, who continued to idealize the large family and to associate family size with customary practice and national identity. After independence, pressure to adopt a population policy accelerated as the need for international aid increased. Warwick, an analyst of numerous national population programs, points out that international aid donors "have had an incalculable effect on the origins, shape and direction of population programs in the developing countries." He continues: "Of all the spheres of national development, population has been the most donor driven. Governments do not usually have to be prodded hard to grow more food or to build more roads, but many had to be persuaded to act on population control" (Warwick 1982:44).

The poster art displayed here, developed for the most part prior to adoption of the 1988 National Population Policy, communicates borrowed concepts about family planning. The posters do not constitute a construction of Solomon Island social identity. They are of interest nonetheless for two reasons: their contradictory nature and their representation of Solomon Island artistic constructions. Foreign ideas are transformed into local models for use in the promotion of family planning. The posters express stereotypes about rural, illiterate people and represent their idealization by urban, educated residents. Not traditional or folk art, the posters reflect modern and contemporary conceptualizations of society. As purposeful, constructed productions, the posters are a medium of instruction. Their messages are not always clear, but the political context within which population issues have evolved goes a long way toward explaining their ambiguities.

NOTES

The opinions in this article are solely those of the author. The following institutions and individuals, however, provided financial or technical assistance during data collection and preparation (1988–1991). In Australia: the Tropical Health Program, University of Queensland. In the Solomon Islands: the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and its Health Education Division, Maternal Child Health and Family Planning Unit, and Malaria Medical Research Institute; Dr. Nathan Kere, Mr. Alvi Lobi, Dr. Junilyn Pikacha, Dr. and Mrs. Charles McMillan, Dr. John McBride, Dr. M. Gilles, and Save the Children Fund of Australia.

1. In the 1960s, as a result of a growing realization that foreign aid for economic development may be wasted in the absence of population control, USAID was sanctioned by the U.S. Congress to investigate problems of population growth. In 1965, President Johnson

directly confronted the issue of the world population explosion and the growing scarcity in world resources in his State of the Union Message (Reed 1983:378). This speech cleared the way for major donors, primarily from the United States, to openly support family planning services in developing countries. Recent debate surrounding abortion in federally funded clinics and foreign projects in the 1990s has made problematic a commitment to population issues by U.S. foreign aid donors.

2. Since 1990 the Health Education Division, as coordinator of media materials on public health topics, has started to work closely with the newly created unit Maternal Child Health and Family Planning (MCH/FP) within the SIMHMS. All of the posters from the division that are described in this article were developed prior to the institutionalization of the National Population Policy (1988) and the newly organized coordinated approach within the SIMHMS.

3. Individuals working within WHO are aware of the shortcomings of their health education materials. This agency contributes scholarships for Solomon Islanders in health promotion training and in the development of an infrastructure to support the production of materials locally.

4. Choiseul, located in Western Province, recently became a separate province, the eighth in the Solomon Islands.

5. SIPPA was founded by a group of urban Solomon Island nurses and mothers. A New Zealand consultant supplied management and organizational support. At the onset, membership fees were very low—less than US\$1; services were provided to a tiny proportion of the Honiara population (Gegeo 1987).

6. Standards for record keeping made estimates of acceptor rates difficult (Gegeo 1987). Continued investigation by Fitzpatrick is planned for 1992–1993 to document community-based distribution programs and other activities of SIPPA and other nongovernment organizations working in the population field.

7. As part of the fieldwork component of the Master in Tropical Health degree, students from the Tropical Health Program, University of Queensland Medical School, Australia, recently completed a study that examined attitudes about contraception and patterns of contraceptive use in Honiara (Bage, Foliaki, and Healy 1992). The MCH/FP Unit of the SIMHMS requested the survey, provided assistance and support, and requested future studies on family planning issues.

MAORI LITERATURE: PROTEST AND AFFIRMATION

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The works of Maori writers have emerged in the last two decades as powerful literary and political commentaries.¹ During this time New Zealand has witnessed a Maori renaissance, whose characteristics have included pronounced and pointed Maori political activity, an increased awareness of the Maori artistic heritage, and, finally but certainly not insignificantly, innovation and experimentation within that heritage. While there has unquestionably been a reengagement with Maori art generally, sparked by the successful Te Maori exhibition in the United States and its triumphal return to New Zealand, Maori literature stands out as a means through which Maori culture can be reexamined, reevaluated, and for the most part reaffirmed. As importantly, New Zealand's colonial heritage and Pakeha complicity have been subject to scrutiny.² This indigenous perspective is in keeping both with the spirit of the Maori renaissance within New Zealand and with the increasing awareness and articulation of the implications of colonialism for indigenous people. Through literature, then, a distinctively Maori voice has penetrated New Zealand discourse.

Only in the last two decades has Maori writing received a national—and, in some cases, an international—audience. This period corresponds with the evolution of Maori political aspirations and the subsequent redefinition of Maori-Pakeha relations. Two Maori writers in particular, Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera, have emerged as especially significant, each producing an individual corpus spanning the course of the Maori renaissance. In this article, I will be concerned primarily with their works, although the more recent novels of Keri Hulme

(*the bone people*) and Alan Duff (*Once Were Warriors*), who are also Maori, will come into the discussion. In particular, I shall be discussing the following works by Patricia Grace: *Wairariki* (1975); *Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps* (1978); *The Dream Sleepers* (1980); *Potiki* (1986); *Electric City* (1987); and by Witi Ihimaera: *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972); *Tangi* (1973); *Whanau* (1974); *The New Net Goes Fishing* (1977); *The Matriarch* (1986); *Dear Miss Mansfield* (1989).

Both Grace and Ihimaera have moved over the last twenty years from presenting celebratory vignettes of rural life to a confrontation with the compelling issues that mark Maori life in contemporary New Zealand. As a result, the lives of characters in later works are considerably less sanitized than in the earlier works; and both authors, tracing the landscape of Maori-Pakeha interchanges over the last century, have made violence a significant motif in their later works. In *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972), for example, Ihimaera describes an idyllic community, where conflict is far less important than the cultural coherence that has held together Waituhi (the East Coast community that appears in all his work). By 1986, in *The Matriarch*, he dissects the physical violence that has been the legacy of colonialism in a reexamination of Waituhi's history. Similarly, in Grace's *Potiki* (1986) Pakeha treachery causes the death of a central character and the destruction of the meetinghouse. In their later works, both examine as well the domestic violence and physical brutality that have come to mar familial relations. However, unlike Duff, the sympathies of both Grace and Ihimaera are clearly with their Maori protagonists: their writings reflect the new shape of New Zealand politics and have become guideposts to defining the course of the Maori renaissance.

To study the development of these two authors, then, is to understand a great deal about Maori perceptions of the New Zealand political order. But however successful such work may be judged, problems inevitably follow this kind of cultural innovation. Pakeha writers are considered as individuals, but Grace and Ihimaera, much to their individual consternation, are seen as Maori who write rather than as writers who are Maori.³ Their position as writers allows them to stand aside from the action, while as Maori they can, with some confidence, present the insiders' point of view. Such a dual perspective situates them for the kind of radical critique called for by Keesing:

European scholars of the Pacific have been complicit in legitimating and producing male-oriented and elitist representations of societies that were themselves male- and (in many cases)

elite-dominated. A critical skepticism with regard to pasts and power, and a critical deconstruction of conceptualizations of "a culture" that hide and neutralize subaltern voices and perspectives, should, I think, dialectically confront idealizations of the past.

This is not the time to leave the past to the "experts," whether of the present generation or their predecessors. Scholarly representations of the Pacific have in many ways incorporated premises of colonial discourse and Orientalism, in assigning a "fixity" to Otherness, in typifying, in essentializing, in exoticizing. (1989:37)

The fiction of Grace and Ihimaera is important because it has appeared not only in the midst of a radical Maori critique of the New Zealand social order, but also at a time when many academic disciplines are wrestling with issues of cultural imperialism.

Grace and Ihimaera as Literary Pioneers: An Overview

Until Grace and Ihimaera published their short stories and novels, the Maori appeared in New Zealand fiction only as characters in Pakeha writing. Pakeha views of the Maori were expressed, formed, and developed through a literary medium alien to the Maori, without Maori reciprocity. Moreover, until the mid-twentieth century, the Maori were portrayed in Pakeha fiction in stock stereotypical modes. Such literary depictions fostered images of the Maori that could not be refuted by the limited social experience most Pakeha had of New Zealand's indigenous population, given the relative homogeneity of most small towns and the isolation of the Maori. Until the postwar Maori migration to New Zealand's urban areas, most Pakeha knew little of their Maori contemporaries. Maori life, on the other hand, has been, since significant colonial activity began in the mid-nineteenth century, invaded by the Pakeha. The asymmetry in literary expression is all the more significant for that reason.

When Maoris appeared at all in Pakeha literature, they were represented as outsiders, as beings external to the action. These stereotypes were cruel representations of an indigenous people, objectifying them, denying them autonomy in Pakeha eyes. Moreover, such literary stereotypes reinforced boundaries that separated New Zealand's two ethnic groups. Young Maori men were shown either as noble aristocrats or as gaudy posturers. Middle-aged men were represented as lazy, and fre-

quently as fat; on occasion, a dignified but inscrutable male elder would make an appearance. Women fared no better than men: young women were either aloof Polynesian princesses (replete with grass skirts and naked breasts) or promiscuous domestics who threatened the sanctity of Pakeha familial relations. The counterpart of the male elder was the wizened but stately matriarch (Pearson 1968:226).

There were few Maori responses to Pakeha representations until the 1970s, when Grace's and Ihimaera's early fiction was published. Their work follows a trajectory that reveals the increasing militancy of the Maori position: an investigation of their work is therefore an exercise in both social history and anthropological understanding.

In their early work, which took the form of short stories, Grace and Ihimaera both emphasized the emotional landscape of rural life,⁴ placing the greatest importance on its enduring integrity. For example, through the course of Ihimaera's work, the settlement of Waituhi is revitalized. A run-down backwater in *Pounamu Pounamu* populated by the elderly, Waituhi is, in *The Matriarch*, a community that remains faithful to its history at the same time that it exerts an attraction for a new generation. Through the course of Ihimaera's work, Rongopai, the meetinghouse in Waituhi, is reborn and restored to its former glory. From being an object of scorn and shame, Rongopai emerges as a great source of pride for the village's inhabitants. Both Rongopai and Waituhi, in their vitality and endurance, stand as metaphors for the Maori condition.

While writers in colonial situations must confront issues of fragmentation and rupture,⁵ Grace and Ihimaera nevertheless present us with positive portrayals of the Maori world, showing communities that have maintained their coherence and integrity. People are tied to the land and to their ancestors through a heritage that is represented as simultaneously political and spiritual. Individual difficulties are subsumed in deep emotional connectedness within communities and by the resulting *aroha* (love, sympathy, empathy) that binds people despite their poverty. Grace, for example, celebrates in *Waiariki* the cohesion and warmth of a Maori community that must struggle to exist in hostile surroundings. In *Mutuwhenua* the differences between Maori and Pakeha emerge as a major focus, the Maori being more spiritual, exhibiting more highly refined sensibilities. These early works are a clear celebration of traditional Maori values. But they represent more than an affirmation of Maori community; implicitly they provide commentaries on the emptiness of the conventions of the conqueror. Despite their marginality and poverty, the Maori are the clear victors in the contem-

porary social order: the very aspects of Maori life that are so laudable—community, commensality, and *aroha*—stand in contrast to the individualism and self-serving greed of the Pakeha.

Pakeha critics see in these rural novels a sentimental evocation of lost times and places. Just as conceivable, however, may be the authors' decisions to depict the enduring vitality, more remarkable in the face of ruin and disrepair, of Maori communities.⁶ These early works could not help but reassure their Maori readership of the validity of Maori experience. In a world where Maori social legitimacy was called into question, this was not a small contribution.

By the 1980s the Maori had adopted a far more active political stance, signifying more intense Maori engagement with the political establishment. Tribunals had been erected throughout the country to hear Maori land claims; land marches and demonstrations gave voice to new Maori assertiveness. The 1980s were heady times: it even seemed possible that the balance that had so far favored the Pakeha might tilt toward the Maori. As these events were unfolding, Grace and Ihimaera changed both the venue and the tone of their fiction. Dramatic events moved to urban arenas, while the authors' voices became more clearly partisan and their social statements more definitive.

Grace's and Ihimaera's move to probe the Maori urban experience was not simply a change in scene; for each of them the move from rural to urban environment, from home to hostile territory, meant the discussion of domestic rupture, permanent fault lines that splinter kin groups, violent confrontations between Maori and between Maori and Pakeha. In *Potiki*, for instance, Grace describes Pakeha appropriation of Maori land, while in *The Matriarch* Ihimaera explores schisms in the community that compound the complex social relations—marred by the violent battles between Maori and Pakeha—in the nineteenth century. In these types of portrayals, the writers reflect both social and literary trends in New Zealand: Maori have become far more assertive, more positive in their statements of their identity, more willing to be intensely critical of Pakeha presumptions of cultural supremacy. In Grace's *Electric City* and Ihimaera's *The New Net Goes Fishing*, the allure of the city is chimeric: life is fragile, marriages are brittle, casualties of broken relations flounder without the support available in rural areas. Young Maori are aliens in a landscape that is harsh, impersonal, and unfriendly; the railway station, the pubs, the marginal arenas of a congested urban center are where these young wanderers are most likely to appear. Pakeha prejudice is all the more insidious, for now it is not only ill-considered, but cavalier and casual.

The effectiveness of the Maori voice is enhanced by the addition of Hulme and Duff as chroniclers of the Maori condition. Neither Hulme nor Duff present especially palatable versions of Maori life: drunkenness, child abuse, and incest loom as issues that must be confronted.⁷ As one critic has written, "Current Maori writing focuses on the disagreeableness of being poor, drinking and violence, of being in prison, discriminated against and patronised, while drawing its richness and strength from the reexploration of historical, tribal, and mythological identity" (Wevers 1985:355).

Both Grace and Ihimaera deal directly with the problems of land alienation in their major novels of the 1980s. The importance of the past and its continuing intrusion into the present is difficult for Pakeha to grasp, but axiomatic for the Maori. Embodied by carvings and meeting-houses, both of which connote in the Maori world the proximity of ancestors, the past is an important presence in these novels.

Grace and Ihimaera deal with historical realities of Pakeha treachery against the Maori: Grace focuses upon land alienation and recent attempts at reclamation; Ihimaera invokes the local tribal history of Maori prophecy that dominated the nineteenth century and traces its legacy into the late twentieth century. The tradition of prophecy provides an idiom that encompasses and lends meaning to the terrible realities of subjugation. Indeed, domination, expropriation, and defeat are themes that must concern Maori novelists today.

Patricia Grace

In her first collection of short stories, *Waiariki*, Grace demonstrates her mastery of vignettes, by capturing for her audience the pulse and vitality of Maori community life. In "Valley" the phases of human life are linked to the seasons (Beston 1984). Beston maintains that Grace's goal at this juncture is to appeal to both Maori and Pakeha audiences: for the former, to evoke recognition and pride in their distinctiveness; for the latter, to demonstrate a commonality of experience that links New Zealand's two major ethnic groups (1984:42).⁸ Yet it seems very clear that whatever common humanity may bind the groups, the moral edge belongs to the Maori. Maori warmth and *aroha* denote an emotional openness, a connectedness that is nowhere in evidence among the more isolated, inhibited Pakeha.

Grace's presentation and sensibility are frequently solemn and grave; there is mockery rather than the self-deprecating humor that lightens

Ihimaera's work. Nevertheless, Grace's perception is sharp, her target more consistently the Pakeha social order. Her work concentrates on the shadows the Pakeha have cast on the Maori landscape.

Most of the *Waiariki* stories are concerned with the distinctiveness of Maori sensibilities. Far more than Ihimaera, Grace concentrates on Maori spirituality. There are tales of dreams that come true, of deaths foretold by the *morepork* (traditionally an omen of death), tales of second sight. Indeed, evidence of Maori spirituality and connectedness pervade this collection of short stories. While her characters are engaged in a consuming round of daily activities, there is a strong sense that this is a fragile order, one that in many ways has already yielded to the new. As this transformation occurs, the characters are subjected to innumerable embarrassments and humiliations. In a world that has ceased to make sense, people have no bearings. There is no rapprochement between the Maori and the Pakeha. Instead there are cutting observations, as in "A Way of Talking." "It's fashionable for a Pakeha to have a Maori for a friend," claims Rose, who has been studying at university. She goes on to mimic a Pakeha characterization of the Maori: "I have friends who are Maoris. They're lovely people. The eldest girl was married recently and I did the frocks. The other girl is at varsity. They're all so *friendly* and so *natural* and their house is absolutely *spotless*" (Grace 1975:5; emphasis in original).

There are regrets. The passing of certain aspects of the old order is no longer in dispute. In realizing that resources are depleted, a character in the title story "Waiariki" draws critical cultural implications:

No. My regret came partly in the knowledge that we could not have the old days back again. We cannot have the simple things. I cannot have them for my children and we cannot have full kits any more. And there was regret in me too for the passing of innocence, for that which made me unable to say to my children, "Put your kits [baskets] on the sand little ones. Mimi [urinate] on your kits and then wash them in the sea. Then we will find plenty. There will be plenty of good *kai moana* [sea-food] in the sea and your kits will be always full." (pp. 41-42)

(As Grace's work progresses, her authority will grow; anger will supplant regret at cultural loss.)

In a very interesting twist her last story in the volume, "Parade," deals with a parade going through town during a carnival, where the

Maori contingent is on a float, dressed in what has come to be defined as "traditional costume." On the float, men perform the *haka*, while the group sings, dances, and twirls their *poi*. The protagonist, a young Maori woman, is overcome as she watches her family perform. She searches faces in the crowd, attempting to gauge the reaction to the spectacle that is her family: "I could see enjoyment on the upturned faces and yet it occurred to me again and again that many people enjoyed zoos. That's how I felt. Animals in cages to be stared at. . . . Talking, swinging by the tail, walking in circles, laughing, crying, having babies" (p. 85). Yet by talking to the elders she comes to realize that these performances have become necessary. They may be embarrassing, humiliating, but "It is your job, this. To show others who we are" (p. 88).

It would be easy to see such performances as cultural vestiges that have lost their meaning, now merely insignia of a calcified past. But Grace forces a different perspective on the reader: she steps back and assesses the role of such presentations in contemporary New Zealand. While she is quite aware that Maori actors and Pakeha observers may well construct the scene in considerably less favorable lights, her point is well taken. In the absence of any dialogue between Maori and Pakeha, the Maori must take any opportunity to present themselves. In this light, Pakeha ignorance or concurrence with the Maori definition is irrelevant. Grace is asserting that the Maori, not the Pakeha, are the critical audience.⁹

As Grace develops as a writer, her anger points more directly at the Pakeha. She insists that the Maori be judged on their own terms. The cost is too heavy when they must constantly be accountable to Pakeha standards. In her later work, she will reverse this process, revealing the flaws in Pakeha sensibilities by holding them up against a Maori mirror. In 1978 she made her goals quite clear:

So I think it is important for me and other Maori writers to write about us in all our variousness, our feelings and aspirations and values; attitudes to life and earth, affinity for land and land issues, about kinship and social orders and status; about the concept of *aroha* embracing *awhina* and *manaaki*; attitudes towards learning and work, towards food—its growing and collecting and preparation. And most especially about the spiritual aspects of all these things. Also about Maoris relating to Pakehas and vice versa, and all that this implies. (Grace and Ihimaera 1978:81)

Grace: Maori/Pakeha Relations

In *Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps*, her first novel, Grace explores the problems encountered when a young Maori woman marries a Pakeha schoolteacher. While this theme should provide an opportunity to explore the barriers between Maori and Pakeha, the novel falters as it moves into this arena of contested meanings.

The female protagonist is known, as the story opens, as Linda. However, she is also the namesake of her grandmother, Ripeka. That she possesses two names is an indication of her dual nature. Indeed, she is a participant in two worlds, each with its own demands. Her choice of a Pakeha—Graeme—forces her and the reader to examine what exactly it is that constitutes her Maoriness, what boundaries exist between herself and her husband.

Ripeka/Linda has grown up with many Pakeha friends and seemingly navigates well in Pakeha waters. Yet even as a child and as an adolescent, she found herself removed from her Pakeha counterparts by mutual misconstructions of meaning. Thus when a young Linda and her Pakeha friends come across a buried greenstone weapon, a *taonga* (a treasure), she and her family understand that it must be returned to the earth. By contrast, her Pakeha friends seek profit from unearthing such a relic. It becomes clear that meaning and significance differ radically between the two cultures.

Linda's grandmother, representing the values that sustain Maori culture, objects to her granddaughter's marriage. Linda ignores her disapproval, attributing it to the inherent conservatism of Maori elders. Of course the opposition proves prescient. As the courtship and marriage of Linda and Graeme progresses, cultural differences threaten to engulf the couple. Through the course of the novel, Linda is transformed into Ripeka, as her Maori aspect begins its ascendancy.

After their marriage, they move to Wellington, where Graeme takes up a teaching post. Initially they are happy, and Linda becomes pregnant. However, Linda's circumstances deteriorate quickly; she begins to have disturbing dreams, which eventually become nightmares. The city itself is transformed from a place of wonder and delight into a grave and the house becomes "a burying place" (Anderson 1986). Linda is haunted in her nightmarish visions by an old woman with a tattooed face (thereby making it impossible for the reader to mistake her for anything other than a Maori). Tormented by fiendish visions at night, she walks the streets of Wellington by day to escape the house. Her wanderings attest to the disintegration and disillusion of urban life. Through it

all, she does not confide in her husband. It is her parents' visit that brings out the truth of her illness. Linda is suffering from a Maori malady. The house is built over a graveyard, a serious violation of Maori notions of personal and social boundaries. It is of course only a Maori who sickens at such an infraction. Graeme is concerned about his wife, but he remains unscathed. Neither knew about the graveyard. It is incapable that Grace is trying to suggest that Ripeka is affected while Graeme is not because she is innately, if unconsciously, susceptible to forces that cannot touch Graeme. Clearly, the implication here is that there are indeed inherent differences between Maori and Pakeha. Maori are more spiritual, more in touch with the unseen and unseeable. The introduction of inherent differences into the New Zealand discourse is especially dangerous. Furthermore, notions of a racial unconscious do not serve well an anthropological sensibility.

From a literary standpoint there is no dramatic tension here, because Graeme is both a stereotype and a paragon. He is dedicated and earnest in his job, concerned and solicitous of his wife in every regard.¹⁰ Grace is aware of the insidious effects of Pakeha stereotypes of Maori. However, this kind of idealization also distorts.¹¹

In *Mutuwhenua* we see more than a mere assertion of Maori spiritual superiority. Quite often, subordinate groups use opposition as a means of self-definition. Implicitly, Grace and Ihimaera's concern with *aroha*, with family, with land are designed to stand in contrast to Pakeha attitudes. At the very least, the richness of Maori life contrasts with that of the Pakeha. However, Grace is not saying that here. While Ripeka's illness certainly separates her from Graeme, it emerges for no reason other than that she is Maori. Grace is taking a position of inherent differences that revolve about Maori spirituality. Volition and knowledge would appear to be insignificant.

Yet Grace is making an important point here. Ripeka/Linda has grown up with a dual nature, in two worlds with competing demands that cannot be reconciled. Although the distance between Ripeka/Linda and the Pakeha world may widen as the novel progresses, she grows closer both to her Maori side and to resolving contradictions that, Grace seems to imply, could be life-threatening to a young woman isolated and unprepared in a Pakeha landscape.

Grace provides a mythological frame for the story. *Mutuwhenua* is the phase when the moon is asleep. Invisible in the heavens, it is nonetheless "buried in the darkness." Grace also recounts the story of Rona, who suffers because she ignores what is buried. By contrast, Ripeka/Linda confronts the hidden side of her identity and triumphs. This

theme of burial refers back to the greenstone buried earlier in the novel, which becomes a metaphor for Maoriness.

In this very political novel, Grace denies the possibility that Maori and Pakeha are, or have ever been, one people. Although Graeme and Ripeka are tied to one another through affection, intimacy, and the greater knowledge that Graeme derives from Ripeka, they are separated by an uncrossable cultural chasm. Moreover, it is Ripeka who possesses the more highly refined sensibilities. For all his good qualities, Graeme is not in the same league. Yet this assertion of differences, while of dubious literary quality, is perhaps politically salutary. We must admire Grace for refusing to subordinate her convictions to compel illusory goodwill, which in the past has ill-served the Maori.

In *The Dream Sleepers* and *The Electric City*, two subsequent collections of short stories, Grace explores how Pakeha domination has narrowed Maori opportunities and Maori stature. By contrast, there is always support and acceptance within the Maori community. In one of her saddest stories, "Letters from Whetu," a young Maori student sits in school writing letters to his friends, while his condescending and ill-informed Pakeha teachers fail to engage his mind. His letters reflect the paths of his cohort: episodes with drugs, stealing rampages, weapons battles. Whetu's frustrations, however justified, will produce neither mobility in the Pakeha world nor success among more conservative Maori. Interestingly, Pakeha critics do not see Grace's clear anger here. On the contrary, they tend to criticize her for pandering too much to Pakeha sensibilities (see, for example, Beston 1984). Her strength lies in the contrasting of the nature of interpersonal relationships: there is sustenance and acceptance within a Maori community, whether these are rural or urban, that is threatened by the encroachment of the Pakeha.

This theme is addressed very directly in *Potiki*, her most political novel. There can be no doubt that Pakeha ignorance of the Maori world and Pakeha reliance on profit and materialism menace the Maori in profound and troubling ways. Yet in this novel she retains a fidelity to Maori form that is new for her. In different chapters each individual relates his/her perspective on unfolding events. Maori are careful not to appropriate other's stories and insist, in meetinghouses, on *marae* (ceremonial arena), that participants be allowed to speak for themselves; no one else can tell their story. In *Potiki*, everyone has an opportunity to speak. Moreover, the construction of the novel resembles a spiral, a central metaphor, which emphasizes the continued ties between past and present. Her insistence on Maori form, her use of idiomatic Maori expressions (translated only in a glossary), force the reader to adopt a

bicultural stance (something that Ihimaera also demands in *The Matriarch*).

In *Potiki* Patricia Grace brings together many of her previous themes in an especially powerful novel. The novel's power derives from its clear political intent. Here she discusses the alienation of Maori land by dramatizing an event that bears a strong resemblance to the treacherous actions of the Pakeha government. Grace again links her modern characters to the heroes of Maori mythology. Potiki, or last-born, refers to Maui, the Maori culture hero, who, despite his lowly status (a last-born in a society that favored primogeniture), was a creative force behind the generation of the Maori social universe. In this story Toko, born of a slightly simple mother who has an unmemorable (indeed unremembered) liaison with an itinerant beachcomber, is the *potiki*. Toko embodies characteristics derived from both Christianity and from Maori mythology, that is, he clearly resembles both Christ and Maui. In imbuing her central character with attributes derived from two traditions, Grace is able to summon forth associations for the reader that will only strengthen the potency of the representation of Toko. Mary, his mother, may well have had a liaison with Joseph, the beachcomber (Tiffen 1978a). On the other hand, there is more than a mild suggestion that Toko's paternity is spiritual rather than human. Like Maui, who was an abortion, Toko was born months before term and taken into the water to drown. Like Maui, Toko was rescued by his kinsmen, who were unaware of his true identity or of his true abilities. Toko, who is in a wheelchair, is gifted with second sight. With her emphasis on Maori spirituality, Grace has given Toko the one weapon that the Maori can use against the wiles of the Pakeha.

Maori spirituality is perhaps nowhere more evident than in their attachment to the land, which has mystical, not material, value. It is the land that encloses and nurtures the family, a unit that supersedes all other allegiances. The meetinghouse is, as both Grace and Ihimaera remind the reader, shaped like a human body. To enter is to be embraced by the totality of ancestors that have preceded the current community. As conflict with the Pakeha mounts over the land, the story moves toward inevitable tragedy. With love and confidence, the family in *Potiki* attempt to reason with the Pakeha developers who want their land to turn it into an amusement park. When the family refuse to give way, the situation escalates into violence. When his wheelchair accidentally triggers a bomb set in the doorway of the meetinghouse, Toko is killed. Pakeha duplicity and treachery are everywhere in evidence, yet the moral victory belongs to the Maori, for Toko becomes part of the

meetinghouse, part of the past to which the Maori will always remain loyal and connected. It is no accident that the bombing takes place on the meetinghouse's threshold, which is a liminal area where past and present are conjoined. Here the difference between Maui and Toko is critical. Maui died in the body of his ancestress, Hine Nui Te Po, and now all his people die. Toko died in the body of his ancestor so his people could survive.

The past has become a character in this novel. Embodied in the meetinghouse, the past frames the action that takes place in the present. Linking past and present are the ancestors and the enduring menace of the Pakeha. In this novel there is no forgiveness for Pakeha treachery; blots on the past are neither dissipated nor forgotten. In the future they may be avenged.

Over the two decades of her writing, Grace's fiction has become more sophisticated and more directly political. Seldom does she seem concerned with assertions of common humanity. Indeed, her recent work is a proclamation of irreconcilable difference. At the same time, her work has become far more pointed in its presentation of a Maori perspective.

Witi Ihimaera: Early Work

Witi Ihimaera's literary career has spanned the course of the Maori renaissance. From his early short stories, published in 1973, through to his most recent works, *The Matriarch* (1986) and *Dear Miss Mansfield* (1989), Ihimaera has moved from presenting celebratory images of rural Maori life to adopting a sophisticated political stance in which his scrutiny has turned to the legacy of Pakeha colonialism. This increasingly political use of fiction would in itself be of interest. However, far more compelling has been the Pakeha response to Ihimaera's literary activism.¹²

Ihimaera's career has been remarkable. He studied music at university and worked for the New Zealand Civil Service for several years before joining the Foreign Service. At the time that *The Matriarch* was written, he was New Zealand's consul in New York. It would be easy to argue that Ihimaera exemplifies a bicultural ideal. Yet the situation is considerably more complex; Ihimaera has taught himself to be bicultural and in so doing has hardly escaped the conflicts of his position. The virtues of his biculturalism rest on the critical stance that he readily assumes: he is simultaneously an insider and an outsider in both worlds. Yet there is an irony that Garrett notes: "He differs from a Pakeha writer in that [he] has to regain an understanding of the values and cul-

tural roots of a society that has been largely destroyed by the very processes that have led that writer towards deciding to write English fiction" (1986:112).¹³

Pounamu Pounamu is Ihimaera's first book of short stories, published in 1972. Here he recreates the world he lived in/heard about as a child and peoples it with individuals who, in the course of his writing, will become increasingly vivid. *Pounamu*, the Maori name for greenstone, is a multifaceted, elusive treasure. For Ihimaera this is an apt image for the rich, intricate life of the rural Maori. His image for the city is the Emerald City, glittering, but not what it appears to be. He is of course referring to the Emerald City in *The Wizard of Oz*, which, as it turns out, was a favorite childhood book of Ihimaera's.

This is the first book of what will become known as the rural Waituhi trilogy. The other books are novels, *Tangi* and *Whanau*. The scene in all three is Waituhi, a small village around Gisborne, and the major players are the fictional Mahana family, who will figure in all the stories and novels through to the most recent, *The Matriarch*.¹⁴ Although there are recurring characters throughout Grace's works, there is not the consistency of persons and places that is to be found in Ihimaera's works. Waituhi is an actual place. However, in literary terms, by keeping place constant over two decades of writing, Ihimaera is able to explore change in an especially effective manner. *Mahana*, a Maori word meaning "warm," was chosen specifically by Ihimaera to summon up feelings about the family. Although Ihimaera is writing about rural life, he is addressing the urban young: "My first priority is to the young Maori, the ones who have suffered most with the erosion of the Maori map, the ones who are Maori by colour but who have no emotional identity as Maori" (1975:118). Accordingly, his focus is on the richness of the emotional life that unfolds for his characters. His emphasis in *Pounamu Pounamu* is on the contrast between a small settlement that yearly grows more depleted, whose buildings are falling into disarray, whose youth is leaving, and the continued complexity of the ties that bind the people to the place. In these novels his criticism of the Pakeha is implicit; his major concern, as he tells us, is to reassure the young urban Maori of the validity of rural experience.¹⁵ Thus the cohesion and interdependence that typifies these communities is clearly seen as something specific to an exclusively Maori context.

Pounamu Pounamu begins and ends with a death, a major ritual occasion for the Maori. While stylistically this repetition links disparate stories, it also focuses on the uniquely Maori characteristics of Waituhi. Happy, lighter stories appear at the beginning of the book, while darker

stories dominate as the book progresses. Corballis argues that this movement from light to darkness suggests disillusion, deprivation, and death (1979:66).

Interestingly, parallel with Ihimaera's development as a writer, and consistent with the Maori renaissance, Waituhi blossoms over time. It is only in the early work that we have the feeling of dereliction and disrepair. In this collection of stories Waituhi has been left to a few old-timers, who play cards and use their homes as museums. When an old woman dies (appropriately playing cards with her friend), her husband, the local elder, remains in their house. Their home is seen as the *manawa*, the heart of the family, an important image for Ihimaera. In this village, kinship ties define everything, creating a multiplicity of allegiances and obligations. Young boys look after their grandmothers, widows are taken care of by other family members, individuals protect one another through complicated webs of mutual responsibility, which are never defined as stifling. There are few young people. In one story, appropriately titled "In Search of the Emerald City," a family prepares to leave Waituhi for Wellington, intent on better jobs and better education. Such an attitude, pragmatic on the surface, breaks faith with the ties that connect people.

In *Tangi*, the second of the trilogy, Ihimaera focuses on the emotional currents that sustain Maori communities through times of crisis. Tama Mahana, a young boy of twenty-one who has been working in Wellington, learns over the telephone of his father's death in Waituhi. He leaves Wellington by plane to return to his family for the *tangi*, the three days of mourning followed by burial, which is a prime ceremony and celebration of Maori identity (see Sinclair 1990). The structure of the ritual is such that the present and the past define and are defined by one another. Ihimaera parallels the interplay between past and present in his narrative structure, moving back and forth between the plane trip, in the darkness of night, that takes Tama to the *tangi*, and the train trip, in the daytime sun, that returns Tama to Wellington. This is more than a successful narrative technique, for it allows Ihimaera to remain faithful to critical Maori traditions, where the past influences the present, and where an orator faces the days in front by addressing his ancestors.¹⁶ By the end of the *tangi* Tama has resolved his emotional crisis and will return to take up his father's work in Waituhi. Out of death, and beyond Tama's consciousness or control, has come a new beginning. Indeed, throughout the *tangi*, Tama chants to himself the familiar: "Death comes, but I am not yet dead, I breathe, I live."

One of the major themes in the book is the sheer force of community

sentiment in times of upheaval. There is not only an outpouring of physical and spiritual support from likely and unlikely quarters, but the community itself, through its rising tide of emotions, its chanting, singing, speechmaking, carries Tama over and through his personal desolation. Ihimaera does not criticize the Pakeha here. His concern is only with the manner in which the Maori community functions. Nevertheless it is obvious that this kind of emotional outpouring is far from common in a Pakeha community. There can be no doubt that its absence is a lack; its presence defines and validates Maori social life. The *tangi* and the values associated with it arm its participants with a moral counter-challenge; for this is an arena that is subject to Maori, not Pakeha, definitions. At a *tangi*, a host of Maori virtues emerge that implicitly and explicitly are set against Pakeha ways. Pakeha come up lacking, for Pakeha materialism loses ground to assertions and demonstrations of Maori spirituality. Maori generosity and hospitality emerge as superior values when compared with rigid Pakeha politeness, which, in Maori eyes, masks a lack of sensitivity. Finally, the *tangi* vindicates Maori definitions of themselves as morally superior. While the Pakeha are seen as motivated by self-interest, the *tangi* provides a conclusive demonstration that the Maori are concerned with family, their near and remote kin, and with anyone who has a lien, however indirect, on their affections. The *tangi* provides a refuge from Pakeha encroachment and an opportunity to redefine the Maori position in New Zealand society.

As Tama's mind moves between the past and the present, the reader learns about the texture of Tama's childhood. He recalls the harshness of the early years of his parents' marriage, of their movements and migrations, with a growing family in tow, in search of jobs and stability, until finally they are able to accumulate enough money to buy a home in the village. There are other separations, but none prepares him for death.¹⁷ At this juncture he must take the assistance offered by his relations. Tama is a neophyte, unable to function comfortably in completely Maori contexts, incapable of speaking at his father's funeral (which must be done in the Maori language and according to strict formulas), of maintaining the farm on his own. He accepts the proffered help gratefully and graciously. The premium is not on independence but on mutuality and interdependence. Using the image that is so important to Ihimaera, Tama recalls his father's constant injunction, "*To manawa, a ratou manawa*" (Your heart is also their heart), a mantra that will reecho through *The Matriarch*. Emotion, love, support, and empathy mark the *tangi*, providing a testimony to all that is positive in Maori life. "It is with little doubt the most intense revelation of the Maori

moral and emotional world yet bared to the public gaze. It is certainly a novel of a kind no Pakeha could have written" (Arvidson 1975:14).¹⁸

In 1974 Ihimaera published his second novel, *Whanau*, the third book in the rural trilogy. Although people are leaving Waituhi, there is a strong sense of resurrection and renewal. Most particularly this can be seen in regard to the meetinghouse, Rongopai, which is a real house with a real history. Painted with enthusiasm by young iconoclasts at the end of the last century, Rongopai was a truly innovative structure. Its failure to conform to Maori traditions shocked tribal elders, as did the representations of the intruding culture that appeared on the walls. The house fell into disuse, a source of shame to the local people. However, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust ensured its revival and sustenance. Throughout Ihimaera's work, attitudes toward the meetinghouse change and crystallize. The people's shame turns to pride, their embarrassment becomes self-respect; in *The Matriarch* the house is as much a character as any of the individuals in the book.

In *Whanau* a young boy, while working to restore the meetinghouse, realizes that the old order may be yielding to one prophesied, but not yet understood. For Andrew,

The paintings are a blend of the Maori and the Pakeha worlds. They illustrate a new world of two races joining. Perhaps the young men intended to show how the Maori world was changing. Whatever the intention, for Andrew Whatu[,] Rongopai symbolises the twilight years of the Maori. As it had been foretold, so it had come to pass: the shadow behind the tattooed face, the pale stranger, had gradually emerged and begun to alter an old way of life. (P. 124)

Tensions between urban and rural lifestyles are given full expression in this volume. Waituhi offers much, as Ihimaera tells us:

These people will never leave because they and the village are inseparable. They have been too steeped in family life. All their relations are here. This is their home, their family. They give life to the village; the village gives life to them. Away from it they will wither. The land is in their blood and they are the blood of the land. They will remain here because blood links blood, and blood links years and blood links families now and over all the years past. It is good to remain *family*. There is such aroha in belonging to each other. It is growing up together, liv-

ing all your years together and being buried next to one another. You are never a stranger. You are never alone. That's why it is good to stay here. (Pp. 17–18)

Although at this stage in his career, the lure of the rural homeland seems almost overwhelming, Ihimaera gives us characters who are in fact buffeted about by complex and competing currents. These are not noble, simple souls living in an organic paradise. On the contrary, there are lives here characterized by cruelty, deception, treachery, and self-serving delusions. But it is easier to survive with the tolerance and support typical of a rural community. However, circumstances too often get the better of these characters. Certainly they are angry at the Pakeha, but somehow blaming everything on the intruders is too facile.

The marginality of Waituhi as a place where the old order is fractured but manages to survive is useful for Ihimaera's purposes. Such damage and rupture that does exist cannot be attributed to any inherent defects of the village, for there inhabitants maintain their cultural integrity; instead, cultural incapacity results from the rootlessness of the new generation, to which Ihimaera turns his attention in *The New Net Goes Fishing*, published in 1977. Here Ihimaera moves his focus to the urban lives of his Maori characters. In this collection there is little to celebrate, less to romanticize. In his dissection of the problems that afflict the Maori, Ihimaera is perhaps closer to Hulme than to Grace. Once again, as in his earlier work, the city is like Oz, ashine with possibilities, tarnished with shattered dreams. "Big Brother Little Sister" explores the damage of broken relationships, the fragility of a diminished kinship universe. Two young children face the streets of Wellington after their mother's boyfriend is violent yet again, able to depend only on one another in the cruel disorder of the urban landscape.

By contrast, the glimpses we are given of the village suggest support, affection, and a sense of values that has been displaced in the city. The cost of success is high. In "Catching Up," a young boy makes it through university by his own persistence and his mother's dogged determination. But, we learn at the very end, the price he has paid is to be removed from his Maoritanga. When he meets an old lady at the graduation ceremonies eager to congratulate him, he is unable to return her greeting. While the old lady demurs, assuring our embarrassed hero that it is, after all, all right, the reader knows that it is not.

The city changes the nature of personal relations. In "Cousins" a young boy learns of the death of a fellow university student, only to discover that they were related. As the funeral draws near and the narra-

tor talks about his cousin, he is filled with regret—regret at not having known his cousin, regret at the capitulations each has made in order to get on in a Pakeha world.

Urban environments with their alien rules and cold impersonality diminish the Maori. By contrast, a Maori setting is sustaining and uplifting. In the final story, “Return from Oz,” a family that had been in the city for a generation packs up to return to the country, hoping to close the gap that has made strangers of kinsmen. It is significant that Ihimaera uses “Oz”—not the “Emerald City—here: There is no lustre to an urban milieu; its glimmering appeal is now known to be sleight of hand. Despite his obvious contrast between urban and rural communities, it is important to see that Ihimaera did not, as critics so often maintain, glorify or sentimentalize a calcified past. There are rural enclaves all over New Zealand that continue to be robust and enduring. The elders are bilingual, they face the decay that years of government policies and neglect have engendered, and they lose, at least for a time, their young to the cities, to the universities, and to the general allure of the Pakeha world. But these enclaves are not romantic or nostalgic entities. There is violence (both emotional and physical), deprivation, and despair. Indeed, even in the warm glow of Ihimaera’s early stories, this aspect can be gleaned. Yet there is enormous vitality in many of these areas, vitality that has ironically been enhanced by government policies that have failed the young and forced them out of the cities and back into their rural homelands. Supported by work schemes (which are themselves the consequences of alarming unemployment among Maori youth), young people are learning Maori language, Maori carving conventions, and the complex etiquette that governs Maori ceremonial. In short, these communities are closing ranks and flourishing.¹⁹ However, in Ihimaera’s fiction, when the Pakeha come and invade these environments, the Maori are especially threatened.

Ihimaera, Radical Politics, and the Pakeha Establishment

The ominous presence of the Pakeha, both in the past and in the present, pervades *The Matriarch*, published in 1986. In this novel Ihimaera is concerned with relations between the past and the present, Pakeha and Maori, ancestors and descendants. The importance of bloodlines is made clear. Once again this is the story of Waituhi, but a much fuller rendition now tells of its connections with Te Kooti, the major nineteenth-century prophet of the East Coast. It is a tale of intense personal rivalry, reflected in and carried on through genera-

tions, of fierce and uncompromising tribal loyalties, and of terrible truths, which will continue to separate Maori from Pakeha.

The protagonist in this book is once again Tama Mahana, now a world traveler and civil servant residing in Wellington. Yet his ties to his background remain strong—in no small part because he was raised by his grandmother, the matriarch of the title, Artemis Mahana. Tama moves well in both worlds, but is not completely at home in either. Resolution will prove elusive. At the novel's end there is neither complete repudiation nor complete acceptance.

Artemis Mahana marries a weak man, fifteen years her junior, to preserve tribal alliances. Although men generally enjoy the prerogative of rank, privilege, and power, in this case her superiority is demonstrable. Ihaka is a conniving, jealous, mean-spirited individual. It is not surprising that Artemis focuses her energy on her grandson at the expense of her husband. But such attention isolates Tama, often placing him at odds with his family.

The book has the organization and the feel of an opera; it is arranged in acts and is performed on an epic scale. The language in italics throughout the text is Italian, not Maori. In this we can see Ihimaera's insistence on the readers' accommodation of Maori conventions; large portions of the text are in untranslated Maori. As the tale of Artemis—the source of her powers, their transfer to and reenactment through Tama—is unwound, the action moves through five acts, between the past and the present, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Tama adopts a dual perspective; he is both participant and observer, the latter achieved through "interviews" that he holds with journalists and well-meaning but ignorant Pakeha. From the insider's perspective, we are witness to the people and events that generated Artemis. The eyes of the outsider only validate her powers. As Artemis's grandson, Tama is taken into the very heart of Maori sensibility. Two strong women, Artemis and Tiana, his mother, fight over Tama. In them we glimpse two modalities of feminine power, power that comes to fruition in a context of male domination and privilege. Tiana is a daughter-in-law, a junior to a high-ranking senior woman. Each woman must employ different strategies as they vie for Tama. This concentration on women's power and prerogatives demonstrates an important aspect of Maori bilateral kinship. In doing so Ihimaera demonstrates the continuing integrity and coherence of Maori culture. Moreover, in showing the weakness of men (namely Ihaka), he affirms the continuing strength of this culture.

This triumph of Maori culture, its persistence in the face of defeat, is literally and metaphorically represented by the meetinghouse. By *The*

Matriarch, Rongopai has been completely redone and revitalized. Celebrating and representing the past of a group, the achievements of its ancestors, meetinghouses are sources of stability and immutability in a tumultuous world. The revitalization of Rongopai provides an apt image both for the East Coast and for Maori culture.

Ihimaera reminds the reader that the travesties of history are not readily forgotten. But this history is Maori history, and a Maori is now telling the story. Here, the history that is recounted is East Coast history (although Ihimaera does admit to some elaboration). Ihimaera is not only suited in a literary sense to telling that history, but he is entitled to it, because this is his ancestral legacy. We have now entered an arena of contested meanings. But this is not an invention of the novelist, nor a creation of the defeated. As Binney has demonstrated (1979, 1984, 1986), the perspective adopted here has been held by those on the East Coast for several decades, although their views have been reconstituted and restructured over time.

In *The Matriarch* Te Kooti is a major character, as is his imagery, resurrected by Ihimaera and shown to be as effective in this century as in the last. But here the valence has shifted: Te Kooti is not a villain, but a victim. The Pakeha is the Pharaoh, who has taken God's chosen people into bondage and exile. To live in the land of the Pharaoh, to abide by his rules, is to compromise yourself beyond redemption.

And yet this is very much a novel of redemption. As the novel closes, Tama's grandfather dies. Tama's relationship with Ihaka encompasses the major issues of the book: blood, ancestry, succession. At his death the issues have been resolved, and Tama has come to terms with his past. Land rights are a major focus of the novel, and Maori concern over land seemed also to be (before the 1990 election) headed for resolution. The nineteenth-century leaders, Te Kooti and his enemy Wi Pere, an ancestor of Artemis Mahana, had been in their way intent on reclaiming Maori land. For Artemis this becomes a crusade, one that is readily carried on by Tama. Artemis must not only confront the Pakeha, she must also take on factions within the Maori community. This is a very important point. Up until now Ihimaera eschewed any discussion of dissension within Maori ranks. In *The Matriarch* this is the source of Artemis's major battles, one in which she uses all the weapons at her disposal. Ihimaera does not ignore such disputes, and his novel gains stature in their treatment. But through it all, the book provides a forum for Maori grievances.²⁰

In *The Matriarch* Ihimaera has invoked the imagery used by prophetic leaders of the nineteenth century. By summoning up an impor-

tant Maori prophet, one who formed a separate church (which still functions today), Ihimaera moves deliberately into the realm of Maori spirituality. For Ihimaera and his kinspeople on the East Coast, the history that appears in standard New Zealand texts fails to ring true to their experience. In Ihimaera's work there is movement toward increasing control of knowledge (Garrett 1986:115), which in both traditions, Pakeha and Maori, means power. For Te Kooti and for other prophets, to command the Old Testament *and* to look to tribal ancestors for guidance was to negotiate two sources of potency and to gain divine assistance against formidable odds. This was not an arbitrary pastiche but rather a return to a past idiom that encompassed and lent meaning to the terrible realities of subjugation.

Ihimaera realizes, as perhaps Pakeha critics do not, that commingling the Old Testament and notions of traditional Maori spirituality enlarges the power that either could command on its own. The cultural coherence depicted in *The Matriarch* is not illusory, nor is it mythical. It reflects one of the many aspects of contemporary life that is inaccessible to the Pakeha. That Ihimaera has returned to metaphors and imagery of the nineteenth century only attests to the Maori point that the past defines and gives meaning to the present. In this sense he has remained faithful to Maori principles while simultaneously relying on the novelist's craft to do so. By merging the past and the present, Pakeha and Maori modalities, Ihimaera can effectively make the point that multiplicity does not imply incoherence.

In his study of Ihimaera's work, Mark Williams raises the issue of the novelist's use of sources. To be more specific, he claims that Ihimaera did not adequately cite sources to which he owed much of the background information (Williams 1990:129–131), an act that cannot be dismissed lightly. Nevertheless, this cannot be my principal concern here. Instead, I am concerned with the stance that Williams has assumed.

Williams maintains that "Ihimaera misrepresents history in order to make his partisan case more convincing" (1990:131). This suggests that there is one history that either can be presented objectively or that can, alternatively, be misrepresented. This kind of either/or logic cannot be sustained (Clifford 1988), neither in contemporary anthropology where much has been written about the epistemological arrogance of the West nor in New Zealand where, at the very least, the lesson of the Waitangi Tribunal and its attendant furor should have alerted people to the provisionality of history. If Ihimaera's representations vilify the Pakeha, emphasizing grievance and condemnation, as Williams asserts (1990:

130), there are at least two responses to this. The Pakeha have represented the same events as those depicted in *The Matriarch*, and depicted Pakeha heroics in the face of Maori ineptitude, cunning, or treachery. If Ihimaera distorts, it is within a tradition marked already by distortion and construction. There are too many interests, some known, some unknowable, to trust notions of "objectivity" and "fact" in the recording of events in which peoples' pasts are at stake. If we feel obliged to view Ihimaera's depiction with skepticism, a depiction that at least has literary license on its side, then we ought to look just as skeptically at the accounts presented by historians and chroniclers.

In fact, the questions raised by *The Matriarch* are especially important. They are more complex than Williams allows. There are not merely two views of history—Maori and Pakeha—that are here being represented: a multiplicity of views/sides have been adopted within the Maori community as well. Wi Pere and Te Kooti were not on the same side in East Coast politics. Moreover, if for some, including the reader, Artemis Mahana is on the side of the gods, for others her behavior and motivations are distinctly diabolical. Ihimaera is pointing out that from different perspectives history looks very different, a point he of course continues in *Dear Miss Mansfield*. His contention that a Maori response to events must be given is evident in his latest works.²¹ That that Maori response will look different and may well have some political ramifications should be neither surprising nor offensive. What is offensive is that Pakeha representations are considered to be neutral.

Conclusion

Clearly, Ihimaera and Grace are using fiction to confront Pakeha control over a history that the Maori, whether happily or not, have had to share. They are well served by literature, which has at its command the capacity to conjure up alternative realities. These are useful fictions in difficult times. But fiction must be interpreted liberally. The Maori have always envisioned alternative realities, especially in light of Pakeha domination of "legitimacy." That these realities consist of many strands does not make them incoherent. In fact, their multiplicity makes them a very effective means through which identities can be negotiated. For, in revealing possibilities, Ihimaera and Grace hint at the insinuation of a counterdiscourse, a subversive counterpoint to Pakeha representations of New Zealand indigenes (Goldie 1990).

The stories that can be told of conquest, confiscation, and dispossession cannot be linear. They must involve branchings, doublings-back,

and missed opportunities.²² This is as true for the Pakeha as it is for the Maori, with one critical difference. The Maori have often been trapped by the stories that can and have been told about them. Maori authors (despite their diversity of vision) have taken it upon themselves to tell new stories. At the same time, such authors have given voice to terrible experience and in so doing have defined it and given it meaning. To be sure these are frightening, but they are also ennobling and sustaining, granting Maori control of present representations and finally granting them control of their history.

NOTES

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1. Maori are the indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand.
2. "Pakeha" is the Maori term for people of European descent.
3. Both Grace and Ihimaera have complained in interviews that their non-Maori work is dismissed or ignored by critics. See Grace and Ihimaera 1978.
4. This is in fact no easy task. They must convey the rich and varied texture of life in small rural communities in the language of the oppressor. Ihimaera gets around this by being an expert at dialogue, which often is in what is called Maori English. Grace is, I think, less successful. She uses Maori syntax in stories written in English, to display her characters' continued commitment to Maori thought processes. It is not until Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* that Maori appropriation of the oppressor's language and culture becomes a full-fledged issue.
5. Nanda writes of this situation for indigenous writers: "The writer here is initially engaged with a reality of a different order and complexion. Historically, socially, spiritually and aesthetically it is a fragmented world. The wounds of history often provide the life-blood that flows into a work of art" (1978:11).
6. Both Grace and Ihimaera in early interviews state that their purpose is to define Maoriness and Maori communities. Grace commented: "We need to be contributors on the national scene, and surely have more right than anyone to be contributors. There is no need for the shaping of New Zealand society to be so one-sided, and not right that this should be so, when what Maori society has to contribute is both valuable and relevant" (Grace and Ihimaera 1978:83). Similarly, in a 1975 article Ihimaera maintained that his early work was clearly political. By portraying an "exclusively Maori value system," he made an implicit critique of the Pakeha order (Ihimaera 1975:116).
7. Perhaps unfortunately, the readership for Hulme and Duff has been larger than that for Grace or for Ihimaera. But the critical and popular responses to their works are as much a part of the anthropology of the situation as are the novels themselves. Indeed, it is

critical to consider such writers in context and to analyze their works in terms of both the Maori renaissance and the ever-shifting political and social climate in New Zealand.

8. Beston argues that Grace always shows deference to Pakeha readers. (Beston's review was written before *Potiki* was published.) I think it is quite possible that Grace's subtlety, her avoidance at this point in her writing of frontal, explicit attacks, belies an intense anger at what has happened to the Maori at Pakeha hands. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Beston writes that her writing will appeal to "various impulses in Pakeha readers: the desire for novelty, interest in a people they commonly regard as inferior, a well intended (if somewhat superficial) egalitarianism, and an element of self congratulation that their culture has enriched the scope of Maori life" (1984:42). To keep her audience, Beston argues that her Maori characters never aspire too high, never threaten the Pakeha order. I disagree with this, but I think it is interesting that Pakeha critics often fail to recognize Maori anger.

9. According to Simms: "From within the Maori community, in its personal concerns and its sensitivity to the human feelings within the landscape—history, ancestors, work, meaning—arise the songs, the dancers, the old stories. To dance and sing with the other Maoris is to affirm her identity in that community." He goes on: "Here is the world of the Maori framed by that of the Pakeha, but now seen from within, so that the voices of the major and the prissy ladies seem grotesque and unreal, while the Maori tradition feels warm and real" (Simms 1978c:198).

10. Interestingly, Beston (1984) argues that Grace is very much concerned with *not* offending Pakeha readers. Thus, he argues, Linda is very much a stereotypical Pakeha housewife, with aspirations that do not transcend the domestic. Moreover, the problems of their relationship tend to be external to them, rather than caused by frictions that might be inevitable given their different perspectives. In this sense I do agree with Beston, because Grace lost an opportunity to explore more deeply the tensions that exist in marriages between the two groups.

11. She journeys away from Graeme during her illness only to return. It would seem that this suggests a more complicated, more sophisticated "accommodation to the dominant culture" (Simms 1986:109).

12. Such response has coincided with the hearings of the Waitangi Tribunal and the association, reinforced by the media, of the Maori generally with activism (Spoonley 1990:33). During this time, anthropologists, historians, and sociologists have examined many aspects of New Zealand society for racism. The media in particular has come under attack, and Spoonley has argued that the level of racism has increased in New Zealand in recent years: "Race relations in New Zealand have changed significantly since the 1950s and 1960s. The issues have become much more politically charged as notions of identity and the distribution of resources based on these identities are renegotiated. At a time when we have a much better analysis of racism in New Zealand society, and groups are working to confront racism, the level of public and political racism is increasing" (1990:36). Ranginui Walker has gone further (1990), arguing that the media has fomented social unrest and generated a Pakeha backlash.

13. Indeed Ihimaera has worked at recreating and redefining rural values for Maori and Pakeha audiences. It is not surprising then that in 1978 Tiffen wrote of Ihimaera: "The process of redefining self images by erecting cultural heroes and celebrating traditional values has already begun. Of all these writers, Witi Ihimaera most directly and unashamedly

edly celebrates the social values of his group in a leisurely, almost incantatory lyrical prose" (Tiffen 1978b:8). For Ihimaera, his job was to "interpret ourselves and our position in New Zealand society and to try to prevent further loss of our culture" (see Beston 1977:123).

14. The Mahana family figures in all of Ihimaera's works, but there is no strict genealogical accuracy. Nevertheless, when the reader encounters Tama Mahana in *The Matriarch*, he is instantly recognizable as the Tama of earlier volumes, although he has different parents and a somewhat different background.

15. Not surprisingly, critics viewed these stories in often completely diametric ways. In 1973 Winston Rhodes wrote that fiction would be a vehicle through which the tension between Maoritanga ("Maoriness") and progress could be explored. "It is this rich emotional life, interwoven with the vanishing customs of a disintegrating community, a rapidly diminishing enclave in the midst of a world of restless endeavor and determined self interest, that gives strength and significance to the best of Maori writing" (1973:263). He points out that, unlike Pakeha writers, Ihimaera does not stoop to stereotypes, nor does he overromanticize. Yet Simms faults Ihimaera's *Whanau* on precisely those grounds, arguing that he drifts towards a "patronizing sentimentality" (1978c:339). He claims that inadequate attention is paid to Maori alienation.

16. Indeed, Corballis (1979) maintains that the structure of the novel replicates important structural considerations. By flying in the darkness, Tama links death, the sky, and his father; by returning during the day, the linkage is with mother, earth, life.

17. Garrett suggests that *Tangi* contains three stories (1986:114): the story of the *tangi* itself, the story of Tama's upbringing, and the story of Rangi and Papa, the mythological Sky Father and Earth Mother who must endure separation. Thus the movement of the novel is three-tiered, encompassing the personal, the social, and the cosmic.

18. Interestingly, although much of Ihimaera's work is autobiographical, *Tangi* clearly is not. When he mentioned wanting to write this book, his mother insisted that he must do so before his father's death, for otherwise such private feelings could never be committed to so public a forum (Beston 1977).

19. Anne Salmond, a noted and highly respected anthropologist, has cautioned against putting too positive a gloss on these activities (pers. com., 1990). Ultimately they result from and will perpetuate Maori unemployment and poverty with all the attendant social ills.

20. Thus Ihimaera writes:

From the pakeha point of view the British Crown was surprisingly accommodating, given the colonial imperative by which all the major white conquerors were motivated. The Crown said that all property belonged to the Maori and could not be taken without our consent and without payment. . . . The trouble is that the Treaty has never had any status in domestic or international law. The pakeha signed it knowing it was worthless.

Now, from te taha Maori, the view is different. . . . Maori tribal lands from the very beginning, even before the ink was dry on the document, have been illegally taken, granted, sold, leased, and wrongly withheld, misused and misplaced. . . . Are we to continue to ignore, in these modern times, the struggle

they endured to prevent land from being swallowed up by the greedy pakeha speculators, and to prevent our customs and traditions from being trampled on by the pakeha? (1986:73)

21. Ironically, in discussing plagiarism, Williams writes: "It may be that a novelist finds some obscure work in a foreign language, translates it, and passes it off as his or her own work. This constitutes true plagiarism, but is undoubtedly rare" (1990:134). Claire Tomalin (1988:72) suggests in her carefully researched biography of Katherine Mansfield that Mansfield might have done precisely this.

22. A very similar point is made by Clifford (1988) in his discussion of the Mashpee.

EPILOGUE: STATES OF THE ARTS

Adrienne L. Kaeppler
Smithsonian Institution

Come, dancing as you are, if you like it, lead away,
For never yet, I warrant, has an actor till to-day
Led out a chorus, dancing, at the ending of the Play.
—Aristophanes, "The Wasps"¹

Scene 1: Before Dawn—The Arts and Pacific Studies

The lack of attention to certain areas of human endeavor often proves to be an advantage. I refer here to the paucity of significant studies on the arts of the Pacific, which, in part, makes it possible to start with nearly a clean slate. Unlike studies of African art, which appear to have been overly influenced by European artists and philosophers and their preoccupation with "Primitive Art" and primitivism in art, the arts of Pacific cultures were seldom touched by these often irrelevant Eurocentric ideas. Such ideas about non-Western art were much more concerned with European art and aesthetics (primarily French) than they were with the original makers of the art. Only a few Melanesian pieces and an occasional Polynesian sculpture, which somehow found their ways to French (and occasionally English and German) artists' studios, had to suffer the indignity of African art objects and the philosophy of *l'art negre/negrophilie* that encompassed them. Thus, in works about Pacific art it is usually not deemed necessary to include a discussion about "Primitive Art" or European reactions to the arts of the Pacific, as Bogumil Jewsiewicki found it necessary to do in what might be consid-

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ered a companion volume to this one, *Art and Politics in Black Africa* (1989).

Yet the arts of the Pacific have not been immune to appropriation by the West (see Peltier 1984). The British sculptor Jacob Epstein acquired the extraordinary Lake Sentani sculpture now in Canberra and was influenced by Polynesian sculptures in the British Museum. The German Emil Nolde collected art works in Melanesia and used them as models in some of his pictures. Picasso had New Caledonia objects and a cast of the famous Rurutu sculpture from the British Museum in his studio. The Frenchman Paul Jacoulet, living in Japan, did masterful woodcuts of Micronesian men and women. The American Charles Sarka, following Gauguin to Tahiti, used Polynesian models and imagery in his paintings, while John LaFarge explored new terrain in Samoa. But few artists (or others) sustained an interest in Pacific arts as appropriate for scholarly or artistic confrontations or explication.²

Although in some ways this lack of interest is an advantage, in other ways it is not. For example, if there were more publications and interest in Pacific art, the authors in this volume could have taken up previous insights and comparative concepts in their analyses. Again, in comparison to Africa where the analysis of artistic forms in the study of society and culture has long been recognized as a necessity by a number of anthropologists (for a summary, see Ben-Amos 1989), Pacific anthropologists are only beginning to note the importance of visual and performance arts in the understanding of society and power (e.g., Forge 1979).

Occasionally a chapter on art can be found in Pacific ethnographies or theoretical works (e.g., Firth 1951). Occasionally a chapter on the Pacific will be found in books on "primitive" or non-Western art—but they are usually less than enlightening. In the last few years, in books that focus on the arts, a few Pacific anthropologists and art historians have been represented: Six papers on the Pacific were included in the 1990 volume edited by Dan Eban, *Art as a Means of Communication in Pre-Literate Societies*; two in the 1991 volume edited by Susanne Kuchler and Walter Melion, *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation*; three in the 1985 volume edited by Paul Spencer, *Society and the Dance: The Social Anthropology of Process and Performance*. But even in a book that focuses on tattoo, *Marks of Civilization* (Rubin 1988), only two papers about the Pacific were included.

In the four volumes published so far by the Pacific Arts Association, *Exploring the Visual Art of Oceania* (Mead 1979), *Art and Artists of Oceania* (Mead and Kernot 1983), *Development of the Arts in the*

Pacific (Dark 1984), and *Art and Identity in Oceania* (Hanson and Hanson 1990), a wide variety of perspectives are brought to bear on the arts, but only a few are anthropological perspectives. An overview volume on future directions in the study of the arts in Oceania was published in 1981 by the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, and two special issues of journals were published on Pacific music—*Ethnomusicology* in 1981 and *The World of Music* in 1990.

Most anthropologists are not really equipped to apply their anthropological training to so-called expressive forms, nor are they trained to recognize the importance of the arts as part of culturally constructed social realities—thus the “initial puzzlement” noted by Nero when she suggested the topic of the arts and politics, that anthropologists should seriously consider the arts. Although many of the papers here focus on politics rather than the art itself, the present volume is an important step in correcting the shortsightedness of many anthropologists who have systematically dismissed the arts in their Pacific studies. Even though most of the authors had not been trained as artists or in art history, or even to take art seriously as an anthropological focus, during their field studies they came upon wonderful artistic material that simply could not be overlooked and took the challenge to use it.

As I was not part of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) meetings during which these papers were presented, I was not part of the discussion of what the authors defined as “art.” Social activities that include expressive forms usually considered art in the West are visual art, music, dance, and theater. These, of course, are Western categories, but with the creep of Western ideas into Pacific island cultures, they are beginning to be accepted into the blurred boundaries of indigenous categories. I characterize art as any cultural form that results from creative processes that use or manipulate words, sounds, movements, materials, scents, or spaces in such a way that they formalize the nonformal in much the same manner as poetry intensifies the formalization of language. I use the term “aesthetics” to refer to evaluative ways of thinking about these cultural forms (see Kaeppler 1989). Evaluative ways of thinking can be applied to all of the cultural forms included in the articles in this volume, and, although the authors do not necessarily focus on this aspect of their data, evaluation can be inferred from Duranti’s excellent analysis of Samoan speeches, from Nero’s analysis of Palauan *bai*, from Petersen’s analysis of Pohnpeian dance, and so on.

More than an analysis of the art form itself, the authors are interested in art as a political resource and especially a resource for asserting iden-

tity. Most of the contributions here are concerned with performing identity and complement the articles in a related volume, also deriving from an ASAO symposium, *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific* (Linnekin and Poyer 1990). Performing identity is probably the most pervasive theme in this group of papers, one that could well be expanded by historical analyses. Indeed, Hereniko's and Sinavaiana's insiders' points of view make strong contributions to this subject. Other insiders' points of view can be seen in action at the Pacific Arts Festival held every four years, during which politics and the arts are enlivened in cross-cultural dialogue.

Scene 2: The Present—Invention, Reinvention, Innovation, Transformation, Recontextualization, Negotiation

It is gratifying to note that the articles here do not dwell on the concept popularized by Hobsbawm and Ranger's *Invention of Tradition* (1983). Except for a few true inventions, such as those by Gibson in Rotuma as noted here by Howard, in my view the concept was inappropriately used in most Pacific studies. Hopefully, the bandwagon has now crashed. The articles herein use more appropriate concepts—transformation (Howard), transformation and recontextualization (Donner), transformation and re-creation (Nero), retention, resurrection, and revision (Flinn, Sinclair), intermixture of indigenous and foreign (Petersen), and especially negotiation (Nero, Sinavaiana, Duranti, Pinsker, and others).

Perhaps one of the thorniest problems in analyzing art has been the wide variety of understandings of the issue comprising such concepts as authenticity, tradition, and acculturation. But the authors here have successfully sidestepped this issue. To avoid the problem of considering introduced *irrelevant* changes as "acculturated," I like to use the term "evolved traditional." In the following scheme this refers to art that is a continuation of traditional art (for example, as it was recorded at European contact) that has evolved along indigenous lines, retaining its indigenous basic structure and sentiment. Thus, objects may be made with metal tools, may be made of similar but introduced raw material (e.g., walrus ivory instead of whale-tooth ivory), may depict European objects, might incorporate Western pitch intervals, an expanded movement vocabulary, or introduced flowers. But if the structure and sentiment remain, in my view the art forms have only evolved. Flinn's discussion of Pulapese dance, Nero's discussion of Palauan architecture, and Billings's *malanggan* theater are examples of evolved traditional.

In contrast, I find the term “folk art” more appropriate when change is made primarily in structure, but the sentiment remains the same. Folk art in this scheme refers to the living art of the community that may incorporate new concepts and methods that were not part of the traditional culture—objects may be made of dissimilar materials, music may have adapted the structure of verse-chorus alternation characteristic of Protestant hymn-tunes, dances may combine movements into narrative sequences—essentially creative combinations of traditional and nontraditional concepts and values. Donner’s analysis of guitar music is an example of folk art. Folk art, of course, is also “traditional” in the sense that it, too, has time depth. But the problem of using the term “traditional” to refer to more than one thing is evident when reading the papers by Stevenson and Jones side by side. They both refer to traditions presently being played out in French Polynesia, but they are talking about two different bodies of material and different conceptual negotiations of the past and present. Stevenson’s analysis of Ma’ohi is an evolved version of traditional art forms, whereas Jones’s *artisanat traditionnel* combines introduced forms with Polynesian ones.

A more extreme stage in artistic change can be characterized as “airport art.” This refers to artistic products or performances that are often evolved from “folk art” (as described above) but are consciously changed in sentiment as well as structure, or in which the object or performance itself overshadows any meaning that it might have had indigenously. Airport art is usually made or performed primarily for those who do not understand the original language and/or culture from which it derived. Pinsker gives several examples of this kind of dance performance.

Being more explicit about exactly what is changing would be helpful for understanding innovation, transformation, recontextualization, and negotiation.

Scene 3: Times Past—Ethnological Art/The Anthropology of Art

This volume helps bring into focus the difference between two kinds of analysis that in the past have often been treated as one, but that I believe should be considered as two separate types of investigation: ethnological art and the anthropology of art. *Ethnological art* studies, as I see it, are not usually done by anthropologists, but by scholars interested in non-Western art for its own sake. The “ethnology” comes in when they place non-Western art into its “cultural context”—often a superficial analysis of how this mask or that dance was used in such and such ceremony to attain such and such ends. Then comes the lengthy

description in formal terms of the mask or the dance. Studies in the *anthropology of art*, however, are more likely to focus on artistic systems, the importance of intention, meaning, and cultural evaluation rather than art in context. Anthropologists are interested in social constructions of the arts, the activities that generate them, how and by whom they are judged, and how they can assist in understanding society. That is, the aim of anthropological works is not simply to understand art in its cultural context, but rather to understand society through analyzing artistic systems. It is primarily a question of foregrounding and backgrounding. In ethnological studies of art, the social relationships of the people are backgrounded while the art itself and its changes over time are foregrounded. In anthropological studies of art, the social or political relationships of the people are foregrounded while the art content is backgrounded.

The articles included in this volume are essentially studies in the anthropology of art—that is, the emphasis is on understanding society, specifically politics and power, with only a limited discussion of artistic content.

Scene 4: Time Future—Art as Socially Constructed Knowledge

Visual, movement, and sound images are important aspects of Pacific cultural traditions, yet few Pacific anthropologists have focused on the artistic content or the aesthetic systems that underlie this important part of traditional systems of knowledge. But without a systematic understanding of content, is it possible to understand art as socially constructed knowledge or as systems of meaning? Although Billings, Fitzpatrick, Flinn, Howard, Nero, Sinclair, Hereniko, Sinavaiana, and Pinsker do give us content, the artistic *systems* that underlie the content are not in evidence.³ Nevertheless, the political manipulation of the content is surprisingly clear.

The integral association of verbal and visual modes of expression is characteristic of many Pacific artistic systems, as noted here by Donner, Flinn, Pinsker, and Petersen. But, although we find out what danced stories are about, except for Pinsker's descriptions I find it difficult to visualize what the dances look like—the verbal is much easier to handle than the visual. There are some tantalizing hints about underlying aesthetic ideas, such as the disguising of emotion in Pohnpei as noted by Petersen, but an understanding of how the content is part of a system of knowledge or how systems overlap or form a larger system is usually left to the reader.

Let the Play Go On

What this volume makes perfectly clear is that although art may be used as entertainment, it is not simply a recasting of the old for purposes of cultural identity. The aesthetic construction of society cries for serious consideration. Politics and power can be maintained, enhanced, and created through artistic forms. What is needed to advance these important concepts is anthropology courses on art and aesthetic philosophy in the Pacific. We can learn a great deal from our Africanist colleagues who have incorporated such courses in African studies curricula. The resulting anthropological studies of the arts include sophisticated analyses of power, politics, performance, art forms, and philosophy. Many Pacific anthropologists appear to be almost totally indifferent to such studies, yet, as this volume indicates, there is much to be gained by studying them. Echoing Alice in Wonderland, one can only agree with the final statement of Billings's article, "Without politics, art has no power; without art, politics has nowhere to go, and no way to get there."

Other Times, Other Places

As I write these pages, two important exhibitions are drawing record crowds here on the Mall in Washington, D.C.—Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration and Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany. As I walked through Circa 1492 I encountered extraordinary works of art from Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa, Japan, Korea, China, North America, and South America, but not an object or word about the Pacific. After an introduction to the arts in Europe and the Mediterranean in the late fifteenth century, the exhibition catalogue goes on to say,

The show then takes a bold leap into the imagination. It invites the visitor on an imaginary voyage, to explore the European search for "Cathay," the Indies, "Cipangu" (Japan), moving into the subjunctive mode to reveal, with the hindsight of 500 years, some of the extraordinary rich cultures that existed in Asia, in the order in which Columbus would have encountered them if he had been able to complete the voyage that he thought he had made until his dying day. (Brown 1991:9)

But that is not how I read the map. If Columbus were to have carried on traveling west from Hispaniola and enter the Pacific, the first place

he would have arrived is Polynesia—with such impressive art works as the stone heads of Easter Island or the trilithon and stone tombs of Tonga. Next he would have encountered Micronesia—with such architectural wonders as Nan Madol on Pohnpei or the stone *latte* of Tinian—or perhaps New Guinea with its extraordinary portable stone sculptures. Why was the Pacific systematically dismissed from this exhibition and catalogue? Politics perhaps, or have we not yet impressed upon the world the importance of the Pacific and its arts?

The second exhibition, *Degenerate Art*, tells the compelling story of Hitler's recognition of the power of art. It chronicles how he dictated what kind of art was acceptable and how artists were controlled by derision, expulsion, and forbidding them to create. Hitler's romantic view of Aryan peasantry and classical forms was the only approved art—the rest, and especially Modernism, was forbidden, completely tied up with his view of what Nazi Germany must do in order to silence opposition. Artists with modern ideas had to be silenced, their books burned, their music and films forbidden. After viewing *Degenerate Art*, I thought the articles in this volume seemed timid; we can only hope that the world has learned from Hitler the dangers of censorship, although the interview here with Vilsoni Hereniko on his political theater-piece shows that these ideas are not yet dead.

As can be seen in this volume, the political use of art is a positive force, destined to be played and replayed in many forms for many reasons on the many stages of the Pacific. Continued critical analyses of both the arts and the politics remains an open field in Pacific studies, but as this volume demonstrates, the dawn has come. Pacific artists will continue to create political works, and the authors of this volume should continue their analyses as a dancing chorus leading the way.

NOTES

1. This epilogue is offered in the spirit of a classical Greek play—a speech by one of the actors *after* the conclusion of a play—that is, it is not a conclusion, but a tag ending as a moral of a fable added for special effect.

2. See Kaeppler 1989 for an overview of Polynesia.

3. For examples of studies that do delve into the underlying systems, see Kaeppler 1978c and Tedlock 1984.

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These Roots Remain

**Food Habits in Islands of the Central
and Eastern Pacific since
Western Contact**

Nancy J. Pollock



This study addresses the question of South Pacific peoples retaining their cultural and dietary attachment to traditional food sources despite Westernization. Why does the use of root and tree starches such as taro, yams, and breadfruit persist despite the availability of other foods? What in fact are the local concepts of food and the values attached to it? Using approaches of symbolic anthropology, social ecology, and household economy, Nancy Pollock explores the values of food, not only in diet and health but also as a symbol of power and well-being that structures social life.

Food in Pacific societies is a culture pattern, unique to each society. But some patterns are also shared and those shared patterns are due to links in times past. Pollock seeks to establish the role that food plays in the world view of certain Pacific island societies. She investigates the cultural mechanisms that have allowed certain distinct features associated with food to remain in the face of many intrusions to those societies.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OCEANIA

EDITED BY DOROTHY AYERS COUNTS

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